Summarised inspection findings

St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School

Glasgow City Council

23 April 2019

School Name   St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School
Council: Glasgow City
SEED number: 8438838
Roll (Sep 2017): 893

Attendance figures for 2016/17 show 90.6 per cent attendance. The figure provided by the school for 2017/18 is 90.4 per cent which remains in line with the national figure.

The number of exclusions per year in 2016/17 were 32. Figures supplied by the school show a reduction in exclusions for 2017/18 to 24.

In February 2017 32.8 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.
In September 2017 59.9 per cent of pupils lived in the 20 per cent most deprived datazones in Scotland.

In September 2017 the school reported that 32 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

Key contextual information

Saint Thomas Aquinas is a Roman Catholic Secondary School in the City of Glasgow. There are seven associated primary schools. The Headteacher has been in post for eleven years. He is supported by four deputes who have been in post from between three and seven years.

1.3 Leadership of change	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 and his senior team are taking forward a review of the vision, values and aims that have been in place for a period of time. This positive move will enable the current group of parents, pupils and staff to have greater ownership of these values. In moving forward with this agenda, it would be helpful if staff continue to take account of the school's unique and richly diverse, cultural context. The ongoing review should reflect the views, some of which have already been gathered, from all young people, parents and staff within the school community. The vision and values have the potential to act as an important foundation for the work of the school and further support a whole school approach to leadership of change. When agreed, the values should underpin all relationships within the school community.

■ The headteacher has a strong focus on raising aspirations and maximising each young person's potential. His high expectations for the attainment of young people, combined with the commitment of staff to young people, has contributed to strong performance in qualifications in the senior phase. This clear focus on raising attainment over a number of years has led to the improvements in attainment for young people.

■ The school improvement plan is detailed and reflects national and local priorities. There is a helpful grading approach which highlights the stage of development for priorities in the plan. It will be important going forward to ensure priorities selected are also linked closely to the revised school vision statement. The Glasgow City Council priorities of raising attainment and achievement are implicit within the plan. The broad priorities in the school improvement plan are shared with staff by the senior leadership team. All staff were consulted on how these priorities are implemented. It would be helpful to involve staff more fully in agreeing and deciding on the priorities which will move the school forward. Parents and young people across the school community should also be more involved in school improvement planning. There is scope to review the number of targets to be overtaken within a school year in order to ensure they are achievable and have a positive impact on young people.

■ Middle leaders develop improvement plans with the staff in their faculties. These plans reflect some aspects of the school improvement plan. Staff work collegiately and are committed to implementing and leading change within their subject areas. There is scope to make better connections between faculty improvement plans to further support a whole school approach to improvement. This would enable all staff to have greater ownership of the vision and the direction of school improvement There is also scope to support further consistency in the quality of departmental improvement plans. Currently, some are overly focused on activities and tasks with little reference to outcomes. The focus of school improvement and planning for change would benefit from further strategic direction. The senior leadership team now need to coordinate plans for change and improvement across their remits. These plans for change

should include further professional dialogue, professional learning and self-evaluation activities for all staff.

- Middle leaders are leading change and improvement well within their respective departments. They are receptive to new ideas and make considered changes to improve practice and provision. They are benefiting from a range of school and council-based initiatives to build leadership capacity. For example, middle leaders are working across departments to lead learning in the context of Glasgow City Council's 'Supporting Improvement: Pedagogy and Equity'. Middle leaders should continue to have a focus on supporting all staff to provide consistent high-quality learning, teaching and assessment experiences for young people. They are supporting a range of improvement initiatives, most of which are linked to aspects of their own subject department.

- In order to manage the pace of change and to ensure measurable impact from improvement work, staff at all levels should now work together to agree specific key priorities for moving the school forward. A collaborative staff approach to the ongoing reflection of the school vision for change will support staff to lead change at a pace which is appropriate for them. A few young people across the stages are included in reflecting on possible areas for school improvement. Involving learners and partners more regularly in planning change will support their capacity to respond and adapt to change.

- Departments have made a positive start to self-evaluation using How Good is Our School?4 to support staff reflection. Moving forward, agreed school and department improvement priorities should be based on a robust and coherent cycle of ongoing self-evaluation. This is an important area for improvement for the school. Approaches to self-evaluation need to be strengthened with systematic evaluation of data, observations and stakeholder views that demonstrate improvements in practice and provision.

- The further development of a collegiate culture of shared decision making across the school will be an important step for continued improvement. The headteacher should continue to nurture relationships across the staff team in order to ensure ongoing positive outcomes for the school community. The depute headteachers offer a variety of strong skills providing support for the headteacher. Senior leaders should collaborate to further develop the team approach to their work. There has been a recent review of senior leadership team (SLT) remits and they should continue to refine these and communicate them clearly across the school.

- Teachers work well together to lead improvements within departments. Staff are keen to work collaboratively to shape and lead developments. All staff demonstrate a commitment to improving the life chances of young people in the school. Young people are very appreciative of the efforts of their teachers in supporting their learning. In particular, there is an extensive range of supported study on offer.

- Communication within and across the school community is varied in quality. There is evidence of some good communication between staff and partners leading to positive outcomes. This good practice could be more widely shared. Senior staff could develop ideas alongside staff and parents to review the content and types of communication that would be most relevant and helpful.

- Young people have some positive opportunities to exercise leadership in a range of contexts. For example, senior pupils provide leadership for other young people in the context of the School of Rugby, as Sports Ambassadors and six S3 My World of Work Ambassadors. Commendably the senior pupils working to achieve the Caritas Award led a retreat for all S1

pupils. There is scope to involve greater numbers of young people across the stages, in shaping school improvement and developing their roles as leaders of their learning and change agents for wider school improvement.

- Commendably, school leaders are committed to embedding the national priorities of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), Career Education Standard (CES) and Work Placement Standard (WPS) into the school curriculum. This is an area of strength in the school. DYW activities are reflected in courses for young people throughout their broad general education (BGE). The DYW group are actively promoting effective employer links across curriculum areas. It is clear that young people are benefitting well from the strong delivery of the requirements within the WPS and CES.

- The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) is used well to provide targeted interventions in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. In a positive move, staff lead the PEF committee, receiving bids for funding from colleagues across the school. This allows all staff to have a good understanding of, and access to, the allocated funding. There is clear evidence of early impact of the use of PEF in the literacy and numeracy improvements in S1/2. Further involvement by parents and young people in the allocation of funding will support a shared understanding of the desired outcomes.

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 positive relationships between teachers and young people, and amongst young people themselves, are a key strength of the school. In classes, almost all young people are highly respectful of staff and each other. There is a strong work ethic in most classes, particularly in the senior phase. Most young people engage well in their learning and respond positively in lessons.

■ There are a few examples where teachers are using highly effective practice in teaching, learning and assessment, although this is currently more evident in the senior phase. Most lessons are well planned and well structured. In most lessons, learning intentions and success criteria are shared with young people. This results in young people understanding the purpose of their learning and in a minority lessons they were effectively used throughout the lesson to support learning. Young people would benefit from being more involved in developing and shaping success criteria for their learning. In a few lessons, staff engage young people using skilled questioning techniques.

■ Teachers have been involved in reviewing the pedagogy of learning and this is evident in classroom displays. It would be important to align this work with a focus on revisiting the experiences and outcomes (Es and Os) and National Benchmarks to ensure that staff are selecting the most appropriate pedagogical approach.

■ There would be benefit in devising a clear whole school approach to the use and application of classroom strategies in order to ensure consistency across learning. Currently, a majority of learning activities are overly teacher led and directed to the whole class. In some cases this limits the pace of learning for young people and reduces opportunities for young people to learn independently. In a few lessons learning experiences were not stimulating and young people became disengaged, leading to low level indiscipline.

■ The school is working to improve the consistency of high quality learning and teaching. Principal Teachers are involved in working with teaching colleagues in the 'Supporting Improvement: Promoting Equity' programme. There is scope to use this approach, together with the Classroom Observation and Shared Reflection, to identify areas for development to inform Career Long Professional Learning and School Improvement Planning. Staff should continue to share effective practice more widely across the school in order to develop a whole school approach to differentiation, high-quality questioning and opportunities for active and collaborative learning.

■ Teachers have visited other schools to share and discuss good practice. The school trios and the partnerships outwith the Local Authority are beginning to enable teachers to consider

alternative strategies in raising attainment. Middle leaders talk positively about this experience and the school should continue to build on this positive start.

■ Glasgow City Council's plans to provide every pupil with a tablet computer next session should enable more opportunities to use digital technologies in teaching and learning. School staff are engaging in in-house 'Lunch Bytes' sessions to develop their own digital learning skills. In a few lessons digital experiences were used to support learning and young people were fully engaged and empowered as learners.

■ There is a skills map displayed in each classroom. Staff should continue to build on this positive start in order to enable a clear understanding amongst young people of the skills they are learning across the curriculum.

■ From S1 to S3, departments adopt a variety of approaches to assessment. A few departments are linking planning learning, to teaching, assessment and moderation. There would be benefit in developing a shared whole school approach to assessment. National Benchmarks are beginning to help staff make more focussed assessment judgements about young people's progress in the BGE. In the senior phase, teachers are giving careful consideration to the SCQF levels at which young people are presented, taking account of national advice. In the BGE there would be benefit in supporting greater levels of strategic direction in order to ensure a more consistent experience for learners across the curriculum.

■ A range of moderation activities are taking place within the learning community and with partner schools. These are at early stages and are focussed on literacy and numeracy. Staff would benefit from further professional learning to develop the approaches and reliability with which they assess young people's progress and attainment in the BGE, including the achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level. There are plans to further develop moderation through collegiate working and professional learning within the learning community and in the West Partnership Moderation Group. A next step for the school will be to take account of Education Scotland's moderation cycle to support effective approaches to moderation and assessment across the school.

■ There are effective systems in place to track and monitor young people's progress both in the BGE and senior phase at departmental and whole school level. The senior phase tracking is at a further stage of development. The information gathered allows teaching and senior staff to plan support and informs a range of appropriate interventions. Senior staff should continue to review systems to ensure data gathered at whole school level is proportionate, relevant and manageable and highlights underperformance in individuals and targeted groups. Learning conversations take place across the school. This positive start could be developed by including more structured and outcome focussed approaches to ensure they are informing next steps in learning, particularly in the BGE.

■ Tracking in the BGE is detailed, using a twin track colour coded system. The data provides a helpful holistic summary of learner achievement at a point in time. Consideration should be given to how this information links to young people's awareness of themselves as learners and how it helps young people to know their next steps in learning. Reviewing and monitoring the use of the significant amount of data and its impact on attainment could also be part of school self-evaluation procedures. Senior staff are aware that they could now include additional available school data which is able to demonstrate attainment over time.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ Staff provide all young people with a wide range of opportunities across the four contexts for learning within Curriculum for Excellence. The curriculum is reviewed annually and evolves to meet the needs of the diverse learner community, including the majority of learners who live with socio-economic disadvantage. Staff recognise that further work will be helpful to involve parents in curriculum developments.

■ Young people in S1 and S2 experience a BGE. In S2, they select four additional electives offering breadth and further skills development. Specialisation takes place in S3 where learners choose eight subjects to support additional depth and challenge. The school report that a minority are working at fourth level. It is important that all young people receive their full entitlement to learn across all the experiences and outcomes, including in dance and drama, up to and including third level.

■ Curriculum transitions are developing well. Teachers in the secondary and associated primaries work together as part of a Transition Council, moderating standards in literacy and numeracy and writing resources together. This good practice provides learners with more consistent learning and teaching across these stages. Pastoral transitions between primaries and the high school are strong.

■ In S4 young people choose seven subjects plus core physical education (PE). Staff understand the need to ensure that in specialising in S3, they avoid closing off pathways for the few learners in school who wish to change subject choices at S4. The few learners electing to do this presently, are supported by subject teachers to cover content missed in the previous year.

■ In S1, there are well-established interdisciplinary learning (IDL) courses within social subjects, science and design and technology. These courses deliver additional challenge and enjoyment, including the development of skills for work. In S2, the global ambassadors course is supporting an understanding of religion, belief and values. Staff place a strong focus on health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes with all young people receiving beyond the government guideline of two hours of high quality PE per week. In the senior school, IDL courses in health and wellbeing are providing a helpful focus on mental and emotional wellbeing, including the successful use of the SQA Mental Wellbeing course for S5 and S6.

■ Young people from S1 to S3 are receiving their entitlement to modern languages in line with the 1+2 initiative. In addition, a Mandarin elective is offered in partnership with another nearby school. A few pupils are experiencing success through studying two languages in S3, with most of them moving to gain a National Qualification in S4. Commendably staff ensure there are progression routes for any learners wishing to continue their language study after completion of a language elective.

■ In S4 learners select seven courses leading to qualifications. A wide range of curriculum options are available, including through the use of very strong consortium arrangements. The school offers flexible bespoke senior phase pathways to widen course choices, for example to stretch a few very able learners. This includes accreditation at SCQF level 7 in anatomy and Advanced Higher mechanics of mathematics. The breadth of these choices are supporting the positive attainment outcomes in the senior phase. Across S5 and S6 most young people select five courses.

■ The school is already working effectively with the new home school partnership officer to offer a range of support to young people facing barriers and challenges. It is too early to measure

impact from this work. There are a growing number of partnerships with local organisations and community groups. These are increasing further the range of opportunities to widen young people's learning. Partners linked to community safety understand well the context of the local community.

■ The school works well with the local college to offer an increasing variety of pathways to the senior phase curriculum. Currently the student choice booklets are focussed on school curriculum. There is merit in planning ahead with the local college to make sure college options can be included in choices at the appropriate time for all young people. Opportunities to engage learners in these wider choices could now be promoted more widely. In the current session a few learners are undertaking Foundation Apprenticeships across a range of disciplines. These arrangements are supporting learners to achieve positive and sustained post school destinations.

■ The Dumbarton Road Corridor Youth Project has been highly successful with fifty per cent of the initial cohort achieving full time employment. Other targeted young people are benefitting from flexible timetable arrangements enabling them to attend extended work placements. The school has a Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) partnership with a local engineering company, and they also engage with a number of employers across all curriculum areas. This offers extensive opportunities to pupils to develop their awareness of the world of work.

■ In general, young people feel well prepared for, and have a good understanding of, the routes to employment beyond school. The Skills Development Scotland (SDS) school partnership includes an appropriate range of activities to ensure that the Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) service offer is delivered to all year groups. The Work Placement Coordinator has completely reviewed how the school offers work placements. This improved system has been developed in line with the Work Placements Standard.

■ Literacy across the curriculum: In a positive move ,the school is revisiting literacy across the curriculum as a responsibility of all. There is evidence of planning by most departments for literacy in the BGE and senior phase. Staff are engaged with local authority partners in developing clear guidance for moderation of literacy in the BGE.

■ Numeracy across the curriculum: Staff recognise the importance of further developing numeracy as a responsibility of all, alongside literacy and health and wellbeing. Over recent years, there have been a number of numeracy development initiatives. For example through a working group, consultation with staff, and parents and the introduction of a numeracy period for young people in S1. The local authority numeracy initiative, Glasgow Counts, is providing staff in the mathematics department with good opportunities to update and refresh their approaches to teaching numeracy. This is also helpful in supporting the teaching and learning of numeracy across the school and associated primary schools. Moving forward, staff could further develop a focus on the impact of these initiatives in order to identify next steps leading to raised attainment.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ See below the choice QI 2.7

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	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

■ Staff acknowledge the importance of children's rights, and reflect this in the way they support young people. This is evident in the warm, welcoming, and patient interactions between staff and young people. Within this supportive environment, young people feel valued. The 'Rights Respecting School Accreditation' steering group, made up of both young people and staff, has developed an action plan to help the school achieve Silver Level accreditation.

■ Almost all young people experience positive relationships with their teachers and this is supporting them to achieve and attain well. Young people who present a range of behaviours as a result of their additional support needs, would benefit from more effective support. This will enable them to understand the choices they make and how their behaviour impacts on other people. Senior leaders have recently established the 'Saint Joseph of Cupertino Hub', as a learning zone. It is important that short term actions taken to address behavioural issues through this facility are not seen as a substitute for the development of longer-term strategies to promote positive relationships and better learning for all young people. A clearer strategic plan for how this facility sits alongside other support systems within the school would be helpful.

■ The delivery of universal support to all learners in the BGE is through the weekly Personal Support period (PSP). Greater clarity is required on how PSP should be helping the school to deliver the universal support entitlements. There is variation in the quality of the universal support delivered through PSP. The learning undertaken during PSP overlaps significantly with Personal and Social Education (PSE). In taking forward revisions to PSE, young people are keen to have a greater role to ensure that the content is more relevant in order that they have a better understanding of issues which affect them.

■ Young people are developing confidence in evaluating their wellbeing by using the common language around Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC). In time, this will enable young people to identify and work towards personal targets and allow important elements of young people's wellbeing to be monitored by the school. A positive feature of practice is the involvement of parents completing wellbeing assessment questionnaires for their children.

■ PE is challenging young people to develop positive attitudes. This is giving young people an important preparation for a healthy lifestyle. There is a high uptake and participation rate by girls in a range of sports such netball and football. There is also a thriving and successful rugby scene at the school with Rugby Ambassadors and school teams such as the Under 15 Girls team. Senior leaders have introduced more opportunities for young people to undertake health and fitness in S6. This has been very positively received by young people who cite improvements in self-esteem, confidence levels, reduced anxiety and improved fitness levels.

- The school rightly identified the need to review their strategic approach to improving the mental health of all young people. There are currently a number of efforts to raise whole school awareness of mental health. Providing Scottish Mental Health First Aid training for staff and senior young people for example, is collectively supporting young people to better deal with stresses and issues of anxiety. The appointment of a full-time counsellor via Lifelink and the 'Commence Blues' programme for those with self-reported mental health concerns, has been positively evaluated by young people.

- Young people who have additional support needs require greater levels of support from teachers. Staff would benefit from professional learning on how to implement strategies to meet the needs of young people. Senior leaders recognise the importance of setting smarter targets in planning for supports and interventions. It is also important to evaluate support plans more rigorously to ensure that young people feel included and engaged and have a sense of success in their learning. Staff should further build an evidence base to demonstrate how well young people who have additional support needs are being supported and have overtaken targets. This is an important area for improvement in the school. Information sharing of sensitive aspects of additional support also require further review.

- The diversity of the group of young people at St Thomas Aquinas bring strength to the school. Young people respect the rights of others and understand the importance of treating everyone fairly and equally. Given the geographic spread of the catchment area, young people feel a sense of community and demonstrate a great sense of pride. Newly arrived young people to Scotland feel well included in the life of the school and speak positively about the 'Welcome Ambassadors'.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	very 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:
- The school provided data on the percentage of young people who have achieved third level in numeracy and literacy by the end of S3 in each of the last three years. Senior leaders recognize that this data is not yet fully reliable and they have now taken steps to ensure future data is based on numbers of young people who have achieved a level ,rather than working within the level. The current data shows that almost all young people in S3 achieved third level in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3.

- The school is using PEF funding very well to support learners to improve literacy and numeracy in a variety of ways. Training has been provided for a small number of teachers to enable them to support reading using a commercial reading programme. There is early evidence that there are clear improvements in reading for learners in S1 and S2. The school has also used PEF funding for targeted literacy support for a group of S3 /4 learners. The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) funding supports a numeracy intervention programme for second level learners. SAC also supports numeracy for the most able young people in S1/2 and also enables a dedicated applied numeracy period for all S1. Commendably , all of these supports are demonstrating early evidence of positive outcomes.

- Principal teachers in English and mathematics work closely with primary schools to support a shared understanding of standards in the BGE. Data on attainment in literacy and numeracy, is shared at point of transition from P7. It would be helpful for building on prior learning and for progression in learning , that this information is shared with all teachers across the school.

Senior phase literacy and numeracy
- All leavers – literacy: There have been important improvements in the percentage of young people attaining literacy at SCQF Level 4 or better, level 5 or better and level 6. These figures overall are in line with the virtual comparator (VC) and occasionally significantly higher.

- All leavers – numeracy: Attainment of young people in numeracy by the time of leaving school shows a positive trend over 5 years. The school performs in line with the VC. The percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 4 or better and level 5 or better has improved over a 5 year period.

- S5 leavers – literacy: There is a small number of young people leaving school with no qualification in literacy. Staff were aware of the specific young people with significant challenges and had taken steps to support them whilst at school. The percentage of young

people achieving SCQF level 4 and above and level 5 and above has been generally in line with the VC.

- S5 leavers – numeracy: The percentage of young people achieving SCQF level 3 and above and level 4 and above is in line with the VC over 5 years. The percentage leaving with level 5 and above in numeracy is in line with the VC and significantly below in 15/16.

Attainment over time
BGE
- The school tracking system is designed to inform class teachers, middle leaders and senior staff of the progress being made by young people across all subjects. This is used well by staff to track pupils who are on target and to provide interventions for those who are off track. There would be merit in including the three years of available data in some way, for senior leaders to monitor patterns of attainment over time in the BGE.

Senior phase
- Performance for the lowest attaining 20% of school leavers is in line with the VC in the last five years although the school are improving year on year. The middle attaining 60% are significantly higher than the VC for the last three years. The average total tariff scores are improving overall over five years. The average total tariff score for all leavers improved between 2012/13 and 2015/16 and is in line with the virtual comparator over a five year period.

- In S4, the average complementary tariff score for all pupils is in line with the VC over the past five years. There was a steady increase between 2013/14 and 2016/17. The middle attaining 60% of young people have attained significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC in the three years up to 2016/17.

- By S5, the average complementary tariff scores of young people in the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% are improving and have been significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC over five years up to 2016/17.

- Commendably ,there is a similar positive story in S6 middle attaining 60% where complementary tariff scores were significantly higher and significantly much higher over five years.

Breadth and depth:
- There are significant strengths in the breadth and depth measures for St Thomas Aquinas, some of the attainment being significantly higher and significantly much higher than the VC.

- In S4, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more qualifications at SCQF Level 5C or better was significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC in 2016/17. There was a drop in the most recent year 2017/18 to in line with the VC. Senior staff have taken steps to address the needs of young people who were in S4 last year, to support their progress in S5. Young people attaining SCQF Level 5A or above was significantly higher than the VC in up to 3 courses in 15/16 and 16/17.

- By S5, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more qualifications at SCQF Level 5C and above was significantly higher and significantly much higher than VC for almost all of the last five years. Again, this is a very strong picture for the school. There are improvements in the percentage of young people attaining one to six courses at SCQF level 5A or above, over the five year period. The percentage of young people achieving Level 6 or above at C pass in up to five courses, has been higher or significantly higher than the VC for

five years. Young people achieving Level 6 or above at A pass , has been higher than the VC for those achieving up to two courses , for almost all of five years.

■ By S6 the attainment for all pupils achieving Level 5C and Level 5A and above in up to eight courses shows a strong 5 year positive trend ,being higher or significantly higher than the VC . Young people attaining a Level 6C or above for up to seven or more courses, is also significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC. Although numbers are smaller, there are also strong trends for those achieving SCQF Level 6A or above in up to six or more courses.

■ In 2018 in S5, 61% of young people achieved one Higher, 38% achieved three Highers and 19% achieved five Highers. All of these figures are significantly much higher or significantly higher than the VC.

■ By S6, the percentage of young people achieving one up to three Highers is significantly much higher than the VC for almost all of the past five years. The percentage of young people achieving between four and six Highers is also significantly higher than the VC over the five years. The percentage of young people achieving seven or more Highers is significantly higher than the VC for the last four years.

Overall quality of Learners Achievement
■ There is a good range of clubs and activities that young people benefit from. The School of Rugby helps boys and increasing numbers of girls to develop skills and attributes through team work and competing against other schools. A few young people represented Scotland recently, when competing in Japan. Senior pupils are gaining leadership skills through Sports Leader Awards. The school gained a Sport Scotland Gold Award, the first secondary school in Glasgow to achieve this. They are currently shortlisted for the Sports School of the Year award. Young people, through these sporting activities, are developing their fitness levels as well as team working skills.

■ In a positive move, the school has supported an increasing number of young people in the senior phase to gain the Caritas Award where they learn about the importance of faith and community. Other accredited awards include the Duke of Edinburgh, where young people are demonstrating organisational skills and developing resilience. Young people are also achieving personal development and employability skills including health and safety skills through their achievement in the Focus Initiative. The success in achieving these skills is supporting improved employment prospects. Staff are aware that further developing young people's awareness of their skill development would be an important next step.

■ Creativity is valued and celebrated across the school. A small group of young people produce a high-quality pupil magazine entitled 'The Standard' that is financed through offering local businesses advertising space. These young people are developing important entrepreneurial and financial skills of running a business. As part of Glasgow School Youth Theatre, young people perform in school shows and community events. Through singing and song writing, they are developing skills in performing. Notably, within the Modern Languages department, young people created and produced a short film. They produced scripts, learned film techniques and gained an award voted for by young people from other schools.

■ The school has recently developed an effective tracking system for participation in achievements, using the school management system. Reflection and dialogue to support young people in recognising the skills gained in activities beyond the classroom would be

helpful. As young people become familiar with the skills they are gaining they should be provided with further opportunities to transfer these skills across learning.

Equity for All Learners
■ There are a number of mechanisms to support equity across the school. Staff are working very hard to meet the needs of a varied pupil population. Young people who live in the most disadvantaged area of the catchment are achieving exceptionally well in this school. Young people from Decile 1 attain significantly higher than young people from similar deciles across Scotland. Staff place a very strong focus on raising attainment for all learners, especially for the 71.5% who live in deciles 1-3. Staff know who these learners are and offer a variety of supports to enable full participation in school activities.

Attainment versus deprivation
■ The school SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) profile is 37.2% in SIMD 1, 22.7% in SIMD 2 and 11% in SIMD 3. Totalling 71.5% in deciles 1-3. Thereafter there is a spread of young people across almost all deciles..

■ By S6, those leavers living in deciles 2 and 4 achieved significantly much higher than others in these deciles, in the latest year, 17/18.

Destinations
■ Over the last five years almost all school leavers have moved into a positive destination. There has been an increase in those entering Further Education. Staff are working with Skills Development Scotland to support young people into positive and sustained destinations. There have been some changes over five years which reflect local circumstances.

Choice of QI : 2.7 Partnerships

■ The development and promotion of partnerships
■ Collaborative learning and improvement
■ Impact on Learners

■ A growing number of partnerships with local organisations and community groups is increasing the range of learning experiences from which young people are benefiting. Community links contribute to of the life and work of the school. Partners are positive about the school and feel that their contribution is valued. There is scope to involve partners further in leading school improvement and self-evaluation alongside school staff. Whilst working relationships with partners are strong, there may be merit in joint professional learning to embed partnership approaches further.

■ Staff work very effectively with local partners to address issues in the community. In conjunction with the campus police officer, local primary schools and Community Safety Glasgow there is a strong focus on reducing anti-social behaviour. This is encouraging young people to have pride in their school and community. The Fire Reach Programme targets those young people likely to be involved in fire raising incidents. Although at an early stage, the campus police officer is having a positive impact on the work and life of the school. A comprehensive Memo of Understanding and partnership agreement sets out a range of effective interventions, such as work experience, crime prevention and supporting a positive ethos across the school.

■ Monthly Community Partnership meetings involving a range of partners, including the police, Aberlour Children's Charity and the Dumbarton Road Corridor Youth project, are planning interventions for young people and their families. Through the use of PEF funding, St Thomas Aquinas and local primary schools are supporting specific families to improve their child's learning. The pupil support team would welcome greater and more effective partnership working from external support agencies. Ensuring that there are regular multi-agency meetings involving key partners who discuss the needs of young people and assess the impact of interventions, is an important next step in securing positive outcomes for young people.

■ The school librarian contributes to improving literacy across the school through delivering a coding project and Aye Write programmes. Young people are being introduced to the Mitchell Library as part of Goulish Glasgow. Lunch clubs in the library are supporting study skills and there are good links with departments in the school such as Business Education. Book lending amongst young people is increasing.

■ All parents receive information about how well their children are progressing. Parents are kept informed of the life and work of the school primarily through electronic social media and of their child's progress through reports and parents' evenings. Senior staff are considering how to develop further lines of communication, including for parents who have English as an additional language, or who do not use the specific social media adopted by the school. There would be merit in involving parents more fully in school decision making. The arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning should reflect parent's rights to be more fully included in decisions which affect their children's learning. The Headteacher is aware that parents should be encouraged to be more fully involved, for example through a Parent Council. To successfully engage parents, senior leaders should continue to reinforce the importance of the role that parents play in supporting their child's education. By working together, senior leaders and parents can develop a two-way relationship based on mutual trust, respect and a commitment to improving learning outcomes.

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.