

Summarised inspection findings

St Ninian's High School

East Dunbartonshire Council

27 March 2018

School Name: St Ninian's School
Council: East Dunbartonshire Council
SEED number: 8337934
Roll (Sep 2016): 750

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

In February 2017, 10.7 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals compared with 14.1 per cent nationally.

In September 2016, 10 to 15 per cent of pupils live in the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.

In September 2016, the school reported that 19 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

Key contextual information

St Ninian's High School is a denominational secondary school serving the town of Kirkintilloch and the surrounding area including Lenzie and the villages of Lennoxton, Milton of Campsie and Twechar. The school has a Language and Communication Resource which provides full-time support for young people from East Dunbartonshire Council whose language and communication difficulties are their primary barrier to learning.

1.3 Leadership of change

excellent

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 school's vision and its values (awareness, focus, creativity, integrity, perseverance and service) permeate the life and work of the school. They are aligned clearly with the Catholic values of the school and are key drivers for change and improvement. This has resulted in highly positive and supportive relationships across the school. All members of the school community work together in a highly effective way. They demonstrate a commitment to the school's conviction that 'we all have more to give'. A culture of collaborative working has been established with everyone working together to raise expectations and increase attainment. All members of the inspection team found these values to be consistently embedded across the school and evident through all aspects of the school's work. Through consultation with key stakeholders, the values of the school are reviewed in an on-going way to ensure they continue to represent the aims of the school.
- Staff know young people very well. The development of a 'pupil equity profile', based on key national criteria and local intelligence, ensures that all staff have a very good understanding of the socio-economic background of their young people and any barriers to learning that they may face. Working together with colleagues in the Achievement Resource Centre (ARC), staff use this information to target individuals and plan interventions to support young people.
- The school uses systematic and rigorous self-evaluation to plan for change. Staff at all levels are highly reflective and use data systematically to inform developments. Effective approaches to tracking in the broad general education (BGE) are providing all stakeholders with a clear picture of attainment and progress over time. Senior leaders use this very well to identify and target areas for improvement.
- The headteacher demonstrates outstanding strategic leadership of the school. He has successfully established a very strong culture of learning and collaboration across the school. This has led to an inclusive education community with high expectations and a culture of aspiration that is both values driven and values based. His approach to effective distributive leadership, built on trust, openness and communication, is a major strength. He is supported by a very effective senior leadership team. Along with the headteacher, they provide clear, supportive and assertive leadership. This drive and commitment to improving outcomes for all young people is collectively shared across the school and demonstrated by staff at all levels. The school makes highly effective use of partnerships and resources to drive its improvement agenda. Staff are outward looking and proactive in seeking out opportunities to improve provision and outcomes for young people.

- In realising its vision, the school has clear and effective systems for strategic planning for improvement. The work of senior leaders to reduce bureaucracy around strategic planning is increasing time for teachers to be leaders of learning within the school. The current school improvement plan has five key development priorities that reflect clearly staff's vision for improvement within the school. These have a strong focus on raising attainment, closing the attainment gap, improving young people's health and wellbeing, employability skills, positive destinations and the promotion of the Catholic ethos. Priorities are well judged and reflect the school's context and local and national priorities. This creates a strong sense of ownership amongst staff at all levels.
- Staff work very well with a wide range of partners who are actively involved in delivering and reviewing inputs which extend the learning offer. The level of involvement varies from one-off talks to co-production of large scale learning programmes. The shared approach taken significantly increases the school's capacity to both adapt programmes to meet the changing needs of individual young people and develop new learning opportunities. The partnership with the Celtic Football Club Youth Academy (Celtic Academy) is a very strong model of co-production with two partners working together to deliver the best outcomes for young people.
- The school has set out a clear rationale for its use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) based around its vision, values and the needs of its community. This is systematically and effectively linked to the school improvement plan. This work includes the creation of the ARC that aims to raise attainment and achievement in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and support young people into positive destinations. Staff in the ARC have a particular focus on supporting those young people living in areas of the most socio-economic disadvantage. Of particular note is the work done to engage parents through the parent empowerment programme that has had a very positive impact on engaging and supporting parents to overcome barriers to their child's learning.
- A significant strength of the school is the outstanding commitment of all staff to developing their leadership capacity. Staff at all levels undertake professional learning in leadership through in-house mentoring and training and in partnership with Columba 1400. The majority of staff have undertaken this training with a significant number attending a residential leadership training weekend in Skye. This has led to a greater understanding of their collective responsibility as leaders of learning within the school and has impacted positively upon approaches to self-evaluation and school improvement. The strong commitment to professional learning demonstrated by all staff is impacting positively on outcomes for young people. As a result of the school's 'anything is possible' attitude, a significant number of staff take on leadership roles within the school and are encouraged to engage in creative and innovative practice in a supportive and positive environment. This culture of learning is tangible across the school and was recognised by the General Teaching Council for Scotland which awarded the school its Excellence in Professional Learning award.
- Young people across the school benefit from wide ranging leadership opportunities. They are highly positive about the support they receive and the opportunities they have to affect change within the school. The school runs a very effective leadership academy for young people in partnership with Columba 1400. As a result, young people are affecting important changes within the school through their work on values, leadership roles and service to the school and its community. They share their experiences successfully with their peers and view themselves as agents for change. There is a very wide range of leadership opportunities across the school for young people at all levels, including captaincies, sports leadership, charity work and mentoring. The work of young leaders within the school is having a significantly positive impact on individuals, their peers, parents and the school as a whole.

- Principal teachers demonstrate strong teamwork and leadership both individually and as a group. Regular strategic meetings with the senior leadership team promote self-evaluation, planning for improvement and collaboration. This has created a cohesive middle management team who are leading learning throughout the school and within departments. Teachers are encouraged and supported to assume lead responsibilities within their subject areas and in addressing whole school issues. There is a commendably strong commitment to self-evaluation across the school. This is resulting in staff ownership of school priorities for change and is leading to improvements in outcomes for learners. All departments have clear improvement plans in place that are aligned to school improvement priorities. They regularly reflect on their progress through the use of *How good is our school?* (fourth edition) challenge questions, through their standards and quality reports and departmental reviews. Areas for improvement are clearly identified, acted upon and reviewed by principal teachers and senior leaders.
- School leaders are well informed about national Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) priorities. They provide clear leadership and work collaboratively with a range of partners to provide opportunities for young people to recognise and develop skills for employability. The school is making a positive contribution to East Dunbartonshire Council's response to DYW.
- School leaders are making steady progress in implementing national priorities in DYW, Career Education Standard (CES) and Work Placement Standard (WPS). Their aspirations are articulated clearly in the school improvement plan for 2017-18, reflecting the national ambition to improve employability skills and positive leaver destinations for all young people. Appropriate targets and actions to achieve the improvement priority are included within the improvement plan. Staff make very effective use of local knowledge and contacts to engage with some employers.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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 very positive relationships between staff and young people are a significant strength of the school. Almost all young people are well behaved and demonstrate genuine respect towards staff and one another. This positive and caring ethos is underpinned by the school's shared values. These values are prominently displayed around the school and young people can relate them to their learning and relationships with others. Staff and young people are building the values successfully into their everyday actions, learning and engagement with each other. Most young people feel that staff know them well and they feel confident in approaching their teachers.
- Almost all young people are engaged in their learning and highly motivated to succeed. The very positive learning environment is supporting young people to contribute well in lessons and challenge themselves in their learning. In most lessons, learning is appropriately challenging and well matched to young people's needs. In almost all lessons young people understand the purpose and relevance of their learning and are able to talk about what they need to do to improve further. Young people's awareness of their own progress is a strength of the school.
- There is a shared understanding across staff about the features of an effective lesson. Most lessons are well structured. In most lessons, learning intentions and success criteria are shared with young people and are effectively used throughout the lesson to monitor learning. In a few instances, differentiated success criteria allow young people to access learning at a pace appropriate to their needs. In most lessons, staff engage young people in their learning through skilled questioning techniques. Increasingly, staff are using methodologies to engage young people more actively in their learning. For example, in a minority of lessons observed, creative approaches were used that encouraged a balance of independent and collaborative learning. Staff are increasingly creating opportunities for young people to lead aspects of learning across the school. This is building confidence in young people, enabling them to take more responsibility. However, in a few instances, overly teacher-directed approaches are limiting the opportunity for open-ended or independent learning. Staff should continue to share effective practice more widely across the school in order to develop further aspects such as differentiation, high-quality questioning and opportunities for active and collaborative learning.
- Staff use interactive whiteboards confidently to make learning more stimulating. However, learners would benefit from further planned opportunities to work both collaboratively and independently using digital technology in order to explore key concepts in their learning. Inspectors observed a few highly effective examples of learning supported through digital technology. Increased time dedicated to staff collaboration to share such practice will ensure a more consistent, high-quality experience for learners across the school.

- Young people are increasingly aware of the skills for learning, life and work they are developing through their learning. In the majority of lessons observed, staff highlighted skills. However, skills were not always evident in success criteria. Staff should continue to build on this.
- Staff use a variety of approaches to engage young people in understanding their progress in learning. There are a range of opportunities for young people to evaluate their learning and that of others through peer and self-assessment. Young people report that teachers regularly have learning conversations which are informing their understanding of what they need to do to improve. Most departments are creating progress 'profiles' so that staff and young people can track progress and have a clear record of next steps. This is allowing young people opportunities to reflect on their progress, targets and next steps and share these with their parents. There is scope for more regular feedback on young people's day-to-day learning to support judgements about where young people are in their learning and to plan to meet individual needs.
- There are well-developed procedures in place for moderation of standards in both the BGE and senior phase. Almost all staff are currently engaged in professional moderation activity locally, and some, more widely. The school has an identified lead who co-ordinates moderation activity and is supporting staff's understanding and skills in this area. There are on-going plans for staff to look outwards in order to strengthen their understanding of achievement of a level. Importantly, this will develop teachers' understanding of achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels across subjects, against national standards.
- There are robust systems in place to track and monitor young people's progress both in the BGE and senior phase. The information gathered allows staff to plan learning in a way that provides support and informs interventions. Staff should continue to build on these practices to ensure that planning takes full account of prior learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The curriculum is providing a range of course options and flexible pathways to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of learners, consistent with the school's curriculum rationale. Learning pathways take due account of the four contexts of the curriculum.
- Young people in the BGE experience breadth in their learning across all curriculum areas, with courses structured mainly around third level experiences and outcomes. Courses are being planned to provide progression with opportunities to build on prior learning. Jointly planned programmes with associated primary schools are supporting continuity in young people's learning. Within classes, fourth level experiences and outcomes are planned for young people as appropriate to their needs.
- The curriculum provides young people with opportunities for specialisation and personalisation at different points in S2. For almost all young people this forms the basis of their study in the senior phase. As the school continues to develop the curriculum in the BGE, it should keep under review the points in the learning pathways at which young people are making choices for specialisation within curriculum areas. Staff need to ensure there is reliable assessment evidence about achievement of the third level before young people make choices to discontinue learning. Courses are designed to provide smooth progression to the senior phase and qualifications. However, the school should ensure that pathways to National Qualifications take full account of prior levels of attainment and teachers remain alert to any potential gaps in learning as a result of course choices made in the BGE.
- There is collaboration within and across curriculum areas. Across the BGE, the school's programme of interdisciplinary learning (IDL) enables young people to continue learning in those subjects they have not selected for specialisation and provides opportunities for young people to apply their learning across different contexts. There is scope to raise further the profile of the skills young people are developing through IDL and classroom learning and how they can be applied to real life contexts. Young people are encouraged to reflect on their skills and strengths as part of their S3 profile in preparation for the senior phase.
- Young people are building on their learning from BGE with clear progression routes into National Qualifications and more vocationally orientated courses in the senior phase. The school is working within the local authority, other schools and identified partners to widen learning pathways. For example, in partnership with the Celtic Academy, the school provides a flexible learning pathway that supports both academic progress and the demands of an intense training schedule. In the senior phase, pathways are combining accredited courses with programmes to support personal wellbeing and development. The curriculum is adding breadth to young people's learning with considerable scope for wider achievement and the opportunity to apply their skills, learning and talents in different contexts.
- There are planned programmes in health and wellbeing (HWB) and religious education (RE) at all stages. The school is meeting national expectations in the delivery of physical education (PE). While young people in S5 and S6 can follow a certificated course option, there is scope to explore ways which would allow a programme of PE to become more widely available. Across stages, young people access the national curriculum for Religious Education in Catholic Schools (RERC) and are developing an understanding of issues and personal responsibilities. This is complemented through the school's programme of religious observance and the 'supporting learners' programme. The school recognises the need to review its arrangements for those young people following flexible pathways to ensure that they can access their full entitlement to RE.

- Teachers share a clear commitment to developing young people's skills of literacy, numeracy and HWB. The school has successfully raised the profile of literacy, numeracy and HWB as central to the curriculum through a range of materials and activities. Within departments, young people are encouraged to reflect on these skills as part of their learning through their learning logs. Collegiate working is leading to a shared understanding across staff of expectations about the delivery of literacy, numeracy and HWB. This is supported by improvement teams and the tracking of young people's progress in literacy and numeracy across their learning. A recently introduced 'learning wheel' is supporting young people to appreciate the higher order skills of literacy. There is scope to share this type of approach more widely across curriculum areas. There is a strong focus on improving young people's numeracy skills across the school. The school has correctly identified the need to review its work in this area in light of the most recent national guidance.
- Learning through financial education, enterprise challenges and vocational placements are preparing young people for life beyond school. Young people benefit from the input of visiting speakers, business mentors and by participating in mock interviews. Currently, work placements are targeted at young people identified as being most at risk of not achieving a positive destination, although some others do take part. Overall, work placements are not developed sufficiently for senior phase pupils. The Skills Development Scotland (SDS) School Partnership Agreement (SPA) includes an appropriate range of activities which support well the delivery of careers information and guidance services by SDS staff.
- Opportunities for young people to undertake qualifications outwith school, such as college-based learning and training provided by third sector training providers, are available as part of East Dunbartonshire's comprehensive senior phase partnership offer. The promotion and uptake of Foundation Apprenticeships is at an early stage with only a few young people involved in the current year.
- While the Career Education Standard (CES) is not yet integrated fully within the curriculum, most teachers are aware of and describe occasions where skills for employability are incorporated within classroom activities. The school has prioritised implementation of the CES this year and is successfully raising awareness with staff.

2.7 Partnerships : Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school is actively developing ways to increase parental engagement in learning. Staff provide a range of opportunities for parents to learn about the work of their children, including workshops and resources to support learning. As a result, most parents who responded to the Education Scotland questionnaire feel the school gives them advice on how to support their child with their learning and the majority report the school organises activities where they can learn together with their child.
- The school communicates effectively to parents through social media, email and at regular reporting periods throughout the year. Almost all parents who responded to the Education Scotland questionnaire feel that they receive helpful, regular feedback about how their child is developing and learning at school. Parents are positive about the regular tracking reports provided by the school. They report that this enhances communication and ensures timely interventions are planned to support their child to achieve the best outcomes.
- The school is supported by a strong and effective partnership with the Parent Council (PC). Most parents feel encouraged to participate in the PC and feel they are kept informed about the work they undertake. The PC should continue to explore ways to ensure that its composition is reflective of the parent forum and wider school community.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion **very 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

- Relationships across the school community are highly positive and supportive, founded on a climate of mutual respect within a strong sense of shared values and high expectations. As a result, the school is improving outcomes for young people. Staff and partners are proactive in promoting positive relationships in the school and wider learning community. Partners feel valued, supported and describe the school as very welcoming and accommodating. Young people are benefiting from this and recognise the positive impact of the wide range of opportunities offered to them.
- Young people benefit from the high-quality learning experiences with most stating that they feel that they are known well by staff. Most young people feel there is someone they can go to if they feel upset or concerned about something. Young people are aware of their rights and are active in discussions and decisions which may affect their lives. For those young people with additional support needs who require an action plan, their views are sought and recorded. Young people's views are leading to improvements through the active pupil council, suggestion boxes around the school and regular evaluations of courses.
- Young people value the 'supporting learners' programme, which incorporates personal and social education (PSE). They describe it as helping them to develop skills, discuss their progress, set personal targets regularly and build a strong relationship with a key member of staff. As a result, most young people know how they can improve in their learning. They feel that they cover relevant aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum which helps them to be aware of risks, make informed choices, and understand the impact of particular behaviours on others. The school regularly seeks young people's views on the topics being covered and uses this along with local intelligence to inform course content. The school has begun to use the National Benchmarks for health and wellbeing to review expectations and plan for progression in learning.
- The health and wellbeing improvement team and the pupil support team have supported staff's and young people's understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They have developed an annual school survey which enables staff to identify and support individuals and groups of young people who indicate that they require specific support with areas of wellbeing. This is leading to improved outcomes for young people through activities such as an active girls' day, cross country championships, a food challenge for S1 pupils, and an S3 health and wellbeing day. There is scope to encourage young people further to self-report progress in aspects of their wellbeing. The school 'Growth Mindset Team' has led the introduction of the growth mindset approach to staff, young people and their parents. This is leading to a better understanding of positive coping strategies for all, although, it is not yet embedded in practice.

The group has planned positive next steps to introduce a pupil-led health and wellbeing improvement team to ensure young people have a strong voice in future planning and developments.

- Staff have a sound understanding of the *Getting it right for every child* approach and what that means for young people in their classrooms. They have worked collectively to develop visual displays of what each of the wellbeing indicators looks like and feels like for young people in their curriculum area. This further enhances the commitment evident from staff to ensure wellbeing underpins every aspect of school life. The school should now continue, as planned, to develop this collegiate approach to wellbeing in all areas.
- The school has developed consistent approaches to monitoring, recording and tracking the attainment and achievement of young people. This is enabling staff to identify young people who are not progressing as expected. There is a particular focus on the progress of young people who are looked after, those from areas of socio-economic disadvantage or those facing additional challenges in their learning. This proactive approach, including the assignment of mentors for looked after young people, is resulting in improved outcomes for young people. Recently, the school has worked to raise awareness and support identification of those young people who have caring responsibilities in the home so that they too can be better supported, nurtured, included and achieve in school. This is currently still at an early stage of development.
- The school's procedures for recording attendance, absence and latecoming are clear and effective. Exclusions from school have reduced significantly over the past four years as a more inclusive ethos has developed. A majority of young people who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire feel that bullying is dealt with effectively. The school has recently revised its anti-bullying policy and should now evaluate the impact of this on young people's experiences.
- Young people with additional support needs attain and achieve very well. There is a need, however, to ensure planning for these young people includes clearer targets and that there is a more systematic and comprehensive review process in place. Targets and strategies used by teachers and young people need to be monitored and evaluated more rigorously to ensure they lead to intended outcomes.
- There are a number of targeted interventions which are leading to improved outcomes for young people. The school has introduced a wellbeing base where staff work intensively using a nurturing approach to support identified young people. This has led to improvements in attendance and engagement. The school supports a Language and Communication Resource (LCR) and is also working with Merkland School. Stakeholders recognise that this is helping develop a fully inclusive school community which is preparing young people well for the future.

- Almost all learners feel included, engaged and involved in school life. Young people can talk about their understanding of discrimination and unfairness and the implications of these on others. They recognise and value individual similarities and differences. They feel well supported to do their best and almost all feel that they are treated with respect. Senior pupils provide service to others across the school community through their involvement in a wide range of planned activities including buddying, supporting learners with additional support needs, charity work and visits to primary schools across the cluster. This is helping to build their confidence as well as supporting younger pupils to achieve and to feel more included. There is scope to formally recognise this contribution through accreditation programmes.

- **Compliance with Health Promotion and Nutrition Act** - the local authority catering provider was not able to demonstrate that all aspects of the Nutritional Regulations are being met. Further guidance, and planning and monitoring of food and drink provision across the school day is required to ensure these statutory requirements are being adhered to.

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
- equality for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

BGE

- The school provided the following information about young people's attainment in literacy and numeracy in the BGE. In 2016 and 2017, by the end of S3 almost all young people achieved the third curriculum level in listening and talking, reading, writing and numeracy. In 2017, a majority of young people achieved the fourth level in listening and talking, reading, writing and numeracy by the end of S3.
- Staff are becoming increasingly confident in applying national standards when making professional judgements about achievement of a level. Moderation takes place both within departments and with staff across the local authority. Staff are making good use of the National Benchmarks to support their understanding of standards. As a result, tracking and monitoring data in the BGE is increasingly robust and reliable. The school is effectively tracking progress in literacy and numeracy from P7 through to S3. This data is used very well to monitor progress over time of individuals, groups and cohorts. The principal teachers of literacy and numeracy closely monitor young people facing additional challenges and are proactive in identifying other young people who may require additional support or interventions. They liaise closely with teachers in English, mathematics and support for learning departments to agree actions and track progress.
- The school's tracking data demonstrates that looked after young people and those residing in areas of socio-economic disadvantage are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment over the course of the BGE. The impact of interventions to support young people with low levels of literacy and numeracy is clearly evident.

Senior phase

Attainment of young people in literacy by the time of leaving school:

- Almost all young people attain literacy as a course at SCQF level 4 or better by the time they leave school and most attain literacy as a course at SCQF level 5 or better (generally consistent over the five year period). The percentage of young people attaining literacy at SCQF levels 3 or better, 4 or better, 5 or better and 6 is broadly in line with the virtual comparator (VC), occasionally significantly higher. In the latest year (2015/16) the percentage of young people attaining literacy at SCQF level 6 was significantly higher than the VC.

Attainment of young people in numeracy by the time of leaving school:

- In the latest year, almost all young people leaving school, attained numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better and a majority attained numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better. The percentage of young people attaining numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better and 5 or better is in line with or above the VC. Attainment at SCQF level 5 or better as a course and SCQF level 6 has declined overall over the latest five year period, although it remains above the VC but not significantly so.

As young people move through the senior phase:

Literacy

- **In S4**, the percentage of young people attaining literacy at SCQF level 4 or better is consistently significantly higher than the VC for both literacy as an award through units and as a course award. The percentage attaining SCQF level 5 or better both through units and as a course is significantly higher than the VC in the latest year. Attainment at this level is an improving picture over the latest five year period. The school identifies higher expectations as reasons for this improvement.
- **By S5**, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5 or better is displaying an improving trend and is often above the VC, occasionally significantly higher. The percentage attaining the course at this level has been significantly higher than the VC for the latest four years. The percentage of young people attaining literacy at SCQF level 6 shows a strong improving trend and is often above the VC.
- **By S6**, the school has maintained strong attainment at SCQF level 4 or better and has improved the percentage of young people achieving literacy at SCQF level 5 or better (as an award through units and as a course award) and SCQF level 6. Performance is strong in comparison to the VC. The percentage of young people attaining literacy at SCQF level 5 or better as a course and SCQF level 6 is generally significantly higher than the VC.

Numeracy

- **In S4**, the percentage of young people attaining numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better and level 5 or better shows an overall improving trend and is broadly in line with, sometimes significantly higher than the VC. The school's performance at SCQF level 4 or better as a course award is often significantly higher than the VC. The school has maintained attainment at SCQF level 5 as a course award and is broadly in line with the VC. It was significantly higher in 2013/14.
- **By S5**, the school has maintained the percentage of young people attaining numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better. It is broadly in line with the VC (previously significantly higher than the VC but the VC is improving at a greater rate than the school). The percentage of young people attaining numeracy as part of a course at SCQF level 5 or better and SCQF level 6 has significantly declined over the latest five year period. Performance remains broadly in line with the VC but has previously been significantly higher.
- **By S6**, the percentage of young people attaining numeracy as part of a course at SCQF level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better has improved overall, despite fluctuations, and is consistently above the VC, sometimes significantly higher. At SCQF level 6, attainment is often above the VC.

Attainment over time

BGE

- Departments across all curriculum areas are tracking young people's progress at three points across the year based on teachers' professional judgement. This data is collated at whole school level and shared across departments. It is providing evidence of progress over time from S1 to S3. Staff are using this well to identify young people not on track with their learning who require additional support or interventions. It is also ensuring young people making good progress are challenged in their learning.
- Staff are developing effective approaches to assessment and moderation and using the National Benchmarks well to apply national standards to their professional judgements. Overall, staff are making very good progress in this area and there are examples of very good practice in a few departments.

Senior phase

- The school has a rigorous tracking system in place in the senior phase that is supporting close monitoring of young people's progress towards National Qualifications. This data is used very well to enable staff to intervene at an early stage where support is required. The appointment of the principal teachers of raising attainment this session is ensuring young people facing additional challenges are closely monitored and supported in their learning. They coordinate the mentoring programme for young people not on track with their learning which provides learners with clear actions and goals.

The average complementary tariff score for all leavers, is consistently above the VC.

- The average complementary tariff score for the lowest attaining 20% is consistently above the VC, often significantly higher. For the middle attaining 60%, it has improved over the five year period and is consistently above the VC, generally significantly higher. In the latest year it is significantly much higher than the VC. The average complementary tariff score for the highest attaining 20% is broadly in line with VC, often above and has improved notably in the latest year.
- **In S4**, the average complementary tariff scores for the lowest attaining 20% and the middle attaining 60% show improvement over the latest five year period. The average complementary tariff scores for lowest attaining 20% are often significantly higher than the VC, occasionally much higher. The performance of the middle attaining 60% has been significantly much higher than the VC for the latest four years. The average complementary tariff scores for the highest attaining 20% has remained broadly consistent and is broadly in line with the VC.
- **By S5**, the lowest attaining 20% and the middle attaining 60% are consistently above, generally significantly higher than the VC. The average complementary tariff score for the highest attaining 20% is broadly consistent and often above the VC.
- **By S6**, the average complementary tariff scores for the lowest attaining 20% and the middle attaining 60% have improved overall over the latest five year period and are often significantly higher than the VC. The average complementary tariff score for the highest attaining 20% is often above the VC.

Breadth and Depth

In S4

- The percentage of young people attaining three or more to seven or more courses at **SCQF level 4** is often significantly higher than the VC over the latest five year period. The percentage attaining four or more and five or more courses was significantly much higher in the latest year.
- At **SCQF level 5C or better**, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more courses has improved over the latest five year period and is often significantly higher or much higher than the VC. The percentage of young people attaining seven or more courses is often above the VC, sometimes significantly higher. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5A or above for one or more to four or more courses is generally significantly higher or much higher than the VC.

By S5

- At **SCQF level 4 or better**, the percentage of young people attaining five or more to seven or more courses is often significantly higher than the VC. The percentage attaining seven or more and eight or more courses has declined over the latest five year period.
- At **SCQF level 5C or better**, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more courses is consistently above the VC, generally significantly higher than the VC. At five or more courses, percentages are significantly much higher for the latest three years. The percentage of young people achieving seven or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better has declined over the latest five year period but remains above the VC, sometimes significantly higher. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5A or above for one or more to four or more courses has improved over the latest five year period and in the latest three years is significantly higher or much higher than the VC.
- At **SCQF level 6C or better**, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to four or more courses has improved significantly over the latest five year period. Percentages are often significantly higher or much higher for one or more to four or more courses in the latest three years. The percentage attaining five or more courses at SCQF level 5 or better has been above the VC for the latest three years, and was significantly higher in 2015/16.

By S6

- At **SCQF level 5C or better**, the percentage of young people attaining two or more to five or more courses has improved significantly over the latest five year period and is often significantly higher than the VC. Percentages attaining four or more or five or more courses are significantly much higher than the VC in the latest two years.
- At **SCQF level 6C or better**, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more courses show an improving trend over the latest five year period (although there is a decrease in the percentage of young people achieving three or more to five or more drop courses in the latest year) and is often significantly higher or much higher than the VC. The percentage of young people attaining seven or more or eight or more courses has remained consistent and is often significantly higher or much higher than the VC.
- At **SCQF level 7C or better**, the percentage of young people attaining one or more courses has been consistently above, generally significantly higher than the VC. Percentages attaining two or more courses have fluctuated but are often above the VC.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Young people participate in a wide range of achievement opportunities which develop their confidence, self-esteem and skills. Most young people participate in at least one wider achievement programme either within or outwith school. There is an extensive set of lunchtime and after schools groups from rugby to 'Comic Con'. Young people from across the school body, and in some cases from link schools including Merkland School, access these sessions. This supports inclusion and the building of positive relationships between peers and with the staff, senior pupils and partners who deliver these opportunities.
- The strong, physical activity focused, wider achievement offer is taken up by large numbers of young people. This supports their wellbeing, improves self-esteem and builds skills including teamwork. The Active Schools sports programme attracts participation by around 40% of the school population annually. Increasing numbers of young people are extending opportunities for children and peers to take part in physical activities by being Sports and Dance Leaders. These young leaders are supported effectively to increase their leadership, communication and organisational skills in order to plan and deliver sessions to associated and other local schools. Cycle clubs, supported jointly by Sustrans and the school, are popular and encourage healthy lifestyles.
- The school recognises and celebrates success effectively through day-to-day praise, award ceremonies and putting candidates forward for local, regional and national recognition. The school is at the early stages of increasing opportunities for young people to undertake nationally recognised achievement programmes. Young people would benefit from the school working with partners, including the Council's Skills for Learning, Life and Work Service, to increase further opportunities for them to gain accredited awards. This would provide valuable recognition of their achievements and their contributions to school and community life.
- Staff gain a strong understanding of individual young people's achievements through annual surveys and regular learning conversations. They are effective in identifying those young people who do not participate in wider achievement opportunities either within or outwith school. Following the restructuring of the youth work resource to the school, it would now be timely to work with key partners to track participation more fully including by type of activity and provider. This would support a joint assessment of need and further increase a shared understanding of what skills individuals and cohorts have that could be built on.

Equity for all learners

Attainment vs Deprivation

- The school has a strong commitment to ensuring equity for all learners. It is raising the attainment of those young people that reside in areas of the highest social and economic disadvantage. The average complementary tariff scores for leavers residing in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile 1 (3.3% of the school roll) are often above the national figure and in the latest year, significantly much higher. For deciles 2 and 3, they are generally significantly higher than the national figure. Young people have increased their attainment at key national measures as demonstrated in the breadth and depth measures for leavers residing in areas of most socio-economic disadvantage.
- The percentage of young people living in the areas of the most socio-economic disadvantage who leave with both literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better has been above the VC for the latest three years, although this has declined over the latest two years as a result of a decline in numeracy.

- The school has a targeted approach to increasing attainment through rigorous tracking and monitoring and its assertive mentoring programme (young people are identified through SIMD 1 and 2, free school meal entitlement (FME) and looked after and accommodated (LAC) measures and guidance referrals). The recent appointment of two principal teachers of raising attainment from PEF is supporting the close monitoring of identified young people and timely interventions to support their progress.

Destinations

- Over the last five years, almost all young people have left school to go on to a positive destination. Percentages are consistently above the VC, significantly higher in 2011/12. The percentage of young people going on to higher education (HE) has been significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC for the latest three years. The percentage of young people residing in areas of the highest social and economic disadvantage going on to HE or employment is above the VC and national figure.
- Targeted work with partners to support young people at risk of not going on to a positive destination is resulting in very positive outcomes for young people.

School choice of QI: 2.7 Partnerships

- The development and promotion of partnerships
 - Collaborative learning and improvement
 - Impact on learners
-
- Partnership working in the school is pro-active, outward looking and based on mutual trust and respect. There are strong examples of the school working with partners to deliver a shared vision and intended outcomes. At the core of the work with most partners is the joint commitment to increase opportunities and outcomes for all learners including those facing additional challenges. The highly developed partnership with the Celtic Academy enables the 70 young people on the programme to achieve both academically and in sporting excellence. Annual reviews, which include feedback from stakeholders, result in adjustments to the curriculum which these young people undertake.
 - Staff highly value the expertise partners bring. They are enthusiastic about working with partners. They describe being empowered to develop new partnerships. This includes creative approaches such as the current work with young people in S6 who are subject champions to develop an alumni project. This project will expand the range of partners the school can work with and provide role models for young people. A small group of staff, led by the PT DYW, meet regularly to identify and plan the strategic overview of school partnerships.
 - The partnership with Sustrans was developed from a shared agenda to support healthy lifestyles. The school and Sustrans work together effectively to address health and wellbeing issues and expand opportunities. Cycling is now embedded as part of school life. This project has successfully attracted funding to release a teacher for one day a week to achieve positive outcomes for young people and the wider community. Aspects of this partnership model are being adopted by other local schools.
 - Communication between partners and the school is regular and valued. Most partnership programmes have an established pattern of planning and review meetings which are supported by day-to-day contact. Some partners, such as Police Scotland, regularly exchange intelligence with the school in order to inform planning and best meet changing needs. The need for more education around social media and internet safety was identified by young people, staff and several partners. As a result, the school has worked well with key partners over the last year to develop and deliver support for young people around these issues. The work has been well received.
 - The school works effectively with East Dunbartonshire Council's Skills for Learning, Life and Work Service (SLLW) to deliver targeted achievement groups. Timetabled activities, such as a Princes Trust Achieve group and a small DYW group, led by the PT DYW, support young people facing additional challenges to build resilience and to make progress. The school and the SLLW youth worker jointly plan and evaluate these programmes. For participants, this person-centred, small group approach is highly effective in supporting them to sustain learning and participate more in the wider school community.

- The school has a productive partnership arrangement with SDS which results in important support for all young people with career information and guidance. A detailed SPA with SDS is jointly negotiated, agreed and monitored regularly to review progress towards delivery. Almost all current targets are being met.
- Across the curriculum, there are a number of employer links which support well the school's partnership working with local industry partners in the public and private sectors. The school is continuing to review and extend these important partnerships to develop more fully its links with employers. Feedback from most employment partners is gathered informally. Employment partners could be involved more systematically in evaluation and planning for improvement. This would enable the school to include wider views to support improvement planning.
- Across the school, staff develop partnerships to enhance the curriculum. Several well-established partnerships provide opportunities for young people to improve their skills, confidence and self-esteem. Co-developed programmes, such as the recent Hackathon with New College Lanark, enable young people to gain knowledge and skills which support enjoyment in learning and provide real-world experiences. For example, young people in S3 taking computing and business studies courses are developing prototype apps through this project. Partnership work with financial sector organisations expands young people's understanding of the workplace and increase life skills such as budgeting.
- Partners contribute effectively to the health and wellbeing of young people. The open, welcoming, flexible approach taken by the school supports partners to provide bespoke support to individual young people. Partners, such as Young Carers and psychology services, also provide training inputs to staff and/or young people.
- The PE department works very effectively with Active Schools to increase opportunities for young people to engage in sports and other physical activities such as dance. They share data and intelligence effectively to identify and address any gaps or downward trends. They have a clear mutual focus on inclusion and, for example, ensure girls participate as fully as boys now. The development of a pupil-led Sports Council which is attended by senior school leaders enables young people to contribute to the planning and improvement of the sports on offer.
- There is the opportunity to build on the productive and positive nature of school partnership working to increase ways for key partners to contribute to school planning and self-evaluation.

Quality of provision of Special Unit (contributes to school evaluations)

Context

St Ninian's Language and Communication Resource (LCR) provides full-time support for young people from East Dunbartonshire Council whose language and communication difficulties are their primary barrier to learning. The provision is based on a model of social inclusion with learners integrating into the wider school community, as appropriate. At the time of the inspection, there were 18 young people placed in the LCR.

Leadership of change

- All staff working in the LCR are fully committed to the school's shared values and these are reflected in their approaches and interactions with the young people. They understand the young people and their family backgrounds very well and parents report excellent relationships with staff. This creates a caring, calm and responsive environment in the LCR and ensures sustained placements for its learners. The principal teacher demonstrates strong leadership in the day-to-day operations of the provision. He engages successfully with staff from across the wider school community to support LCR learners either in the base or in their classrooms. There are close links with subject departments across the school and autism awareness training is offered to all staff. This means that when LCR learners attend mainstream classes, staff are well prepared to meet their needs and young people's attendance in mainstream classes can be sustained.
- The improvement plan for the LCR reflects the priorities of the wider school community. Priorities have been identified to improve learners' experiences to meet their needs. The close staff team meets weekly to reflect on the progress of the young people and their practice, and adjust approaches accordingly. The principal teacher also attends the school pupil support meetings. We have discussed with staff how young people's plans and records of meetings can be improved so that the impact of support strategies can be evaluated and evidenced better.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- The learning environment in the LCR is built on positive, nurturing relationships. Staff are welcoming, accommodating and flexible in their approaches. They have a very good understanding of each young person's individual needs and work effectively as a team to meet these. Their holistic approach to meeting the learning needs of the young people results in young people wanting to come to school, where they feel safe, supported, and are engaged in learning.
- Explanations and instructions are clear and staff observe learners closely to inform well timed interventions. In most lessons in the LCR, the pace of learning is good and there is an effective balance between teacher-led and independent tasks. In a few cases, when young people are working independently, the purpose of learning is not always clear. We have discussed with staff how to improve individual learning plans for young people, linked more clearly with specific, measurable, achievable targets in their action plans.

- Young people are engaged in a variety of learning activities across the school, and almost all learners in the LCR attend mainstream classes. This provides appropriate challenge for them, both socially and academically. There is scope to extend the learning environments for a few learners, for example by making greater use of the wider community including outdoor spaces and links with businesses. This will help young people to have more opportunities to develop skills for life and work.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Staff in the LCR have a shared understanding of wellbeing and place this at the heart of their work. Young people are very much considered as individuals and flexible timetables which build on their strengths and interests, are in place for each learner. This supports them to make progress in their learning and development. Developing communication and social skills is a priority and staff model appropriate behaviour and communication at all times. Restorative approaches are used to resolve difficulties which help to develop an understanding of healthy relationships and how to manage and maintain friendships.
- Wellbeing indicators are used in the assessment of young people in the LCR and an action plan is devised based on this. Targets in these action plans are, however, too broad and general. Plans now need to be developed to support better planning for individual learning needs. This will also allow staff to evidence progress and evaluate the impact of support more systematically and effectively.
- Approaches to equality and inclusion ensure that young people in the LCR have opportunities to be involved in the wider life of the school. As well as attending mainstream classes, young people attend clubs and are represented on a variety of leadership groups such as the pupil council. Young people and their parents report that this results in a sense of belonging and helps to develop young people's confidence.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Learners in the LCR are working at age and stage appropriate levels and are making good overall progress. There is evidence of senior pupils leaving school with a range of qualifications and going on to positive post-school destinations. SDS staff support young people through one-to-one career coaching as appropriate.
- Young people have a range of opportunities for wider achievement in St Ninian's High School. This includes attendance at school clubs and participation in school trips such as to the Sea Life Centre in Loch Lomond and taking part in skiing lessons. This is helping to develop young people's social skills and confidence. The school should consider widening the use of accreditation for these wider achievement opportunities.

Other information

- Young people in the LCR who access mainstream classes enjoy a well-planned coverage of curricular areas in S1 to S3, and have good opportunities to study National Qualifications from S4 to S6. Overall, this results in positive outcomes for learners.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- The outstanding culture of leadership and learning at every level. Collaborative working is a significant feature of the school with everyone working together to deliver a shared vision for the school community.
- The very strong sense of shared values across the school community which are strongly reflected in every aspect of the school's work and over which there is genuine ownership by staff, young people, parents and partners.

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.

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