



St. Mark's Primary School

Standards and Quality Summary

Session 2021-2022



DIGITAL SCHOOLS
AWARDS SCOTLAND



How good is our leadership and approach to improvement?

All stakeholders have been involved in the process of refreshing the curriculum rationale. Almost all parents (93%) either agree or strongly agree that their child currently receives high quality learning in all curricular areas. In spite of this positive affirmation of the current curricular offer, pupils, parents and carers shared a range of suggestions to better tailor the curriculum to reflect the context of St. Mark's and to provide highly relevant learning experiences that meet the needs and interests of all learners.

Staff and pupil evaluations indicate that there have been increased opportunities for pupils to lead their own learning. All teachers consult pupils on areas of interest and involve children in the planning of interdisciplinary learning (IDL) topics. Primary 7 pupil-led IDL topic on 'Black Lives Matter' was commended by East Renfrewshire's Education Committee as an excellent example of pupil voice and participation.

Outdoor learning experiences have been timetabled as an entitlement, and are providing open-ended experiences for pupils to lead learning and show leadership in a range of creative contexts.

Streamlined versions of One Note online planners were created and successfully introduced. All staff agreed that the planners helped to facilitate better discussions around teaching and learning. Staff training and ongoing support was provided for all staff to ensure a consistency of approach across stages.

Moderation sessions were re-designed to support curriculum development work on approaches to high quality learning and teaching and, in particular, formative assessment. Most classroom learning visits across the year evidenced a greater consistency and range of formative assessment strategies.

Primary teaching staff participated in a St. Luke's cluster moderation event. This event successfully addressed the area of learner feedback in the context of remote learning. Almost all (97%) participants stated that the moderation activity had increased their confidence in providing effective feedback to learners. All participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the moderation session allowed them to work towards a shared understanding of consistent, manageable and effective approaches to feedback. The cluster was invited to share their practice with Education Scotland in relation to a review of remote learning quality assurance processes.

Supporting staff wellbeing and providing pastoral care is a significant strength of the school. All staff are supportive of each other and have worked well to access and share resources that address their own wellbeing, particularly during lockdown when working remotely.

Time was protected during staff meetings and on in service days for wellbeing activities, staff masses and professional learning, including East Renfrewshire's HealthiER Minds resource and the GTCS Wellbeing Webinars. Staff feedback indicates that this careful scheduling of wellbeing time was effective in creating a productive balance in their professional lives. Staff describe the school as "welcoming", "supportive", "incredibly positive and uplifting" and "very much focused on the needs of all staff."

Staff also feel supported in relation to the school offering a safe working environment. They believe that the health of staff is taken seriously, reflected in a range of measures, including Covid self-testing kits, social distancing in shared areas, clear and consistent 'Test and Protect' procedures and regular briefings and communications with significant updates.

How good is the quality of care and education we offer?

All staff participated in professional reading, blended learning training and related moderation activities aimed at building on strengths from the first period of lockdown. Teachers are aware of updated policies and expectations around blended learning approaches. Most teachers demonstrated effective use of technology and an effective blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning during learning visits.

Mindset Month was celebrated across the school in November to build on the work done in class in promoting resilience and learning from mistakes. STEAM challenges, with a particular focus on Engineering and Maths further developed learners' problem solving skills and ability to apply skills in new situations. Weekly Growth Mindset Awards are distributed to pupils displaying determination, perseverance and a positive mindset in the face of challenges.

Daily Literacy Learning (DLL) was introduced in Primary 2 to raise attainment and improve reading confidence and fluency. 86% of pupils were non-readers or reading at emergent literacy levels before participating in DLL. 42% of pupils were reading above age expected levels after participating in DLL. All pupils demonstrate increased independence and confidence during reading lessons.

Daily collaborative maths starters were introduced and are used consistently in almost all classes. Observations and pupil dialogue demonstrate a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and engagement in lessons, as well as developing their ability to apply skills and explain strategies in a range of contexts.

Almost all pupils (96%) engaged regularly in remote learning or in-person learning at the St. Mark's hub during the period of lockdown. Support for learning, nurture and learning loss provision also continued through in-person "Reconnect" sessions in school, complemented by group and individual Google Meets.

A range of high-quality experiences were planned and delivered daily to ensure Health and Wellbeing remained a key focus during remote learning. Teachers promoted outdoor learning, 'Fresh Air Fridays', regular screen breaks and the importance of activity and exercise. Online assemblies delivered consistent messages around the SHANARRI indicators and provided an opportunity for children to sing and dance together from home. Established Health and Wellbeing Resources, such as PATHS and the Compassionate Connected Classroom were delivered remotely, to ensure consistency of approach and progression across the year.

All teachers demonstrated an increased range of pedagogical approaches, utilising live and recorded lessons and sourcing lessons from ERC video vault, West OS and e-Sgoil. Peer observation and support took place during live lessons to assist with technical issues and to quality assure standards.

Since the introduction of the Greenhouse Room in August 2020, a number of children have benefitted from spending time in a smaller group setting that caters to their individual learning styles and needs. Teachers and support staff have provided very good levels of support and almost all children are meeting, if not exceeding, their targets.

All pupils are making progress in achieving their targets in the nurture classroom. The consistent, daily approaches used with our core nurture group in P1-3 are having a significant impact.

Targeted interventions to raise attainment in reading have had a positive impact on identified pupils' reading ability and confidence. P3 pupils who participated in TRAIL (Together Raising Attainment in Literacy) all demonstrated an increased reading age as a result. Twelve pupils from P4-7 received individual support through the Together Better Readers programme. Prior to the intervention, assessments showed that learners were reading at an average of 10 bands lower than the expected level for their age and stage. By the end of May, all children's reading ability had improved. The average is now 3 bands below the expected level. Five children are now reading at or beyond the level expected and no longer require support.

How good are we at ensuring the best possible outcomes for all our children?

St Mark's has a positive, nurturing ethos based on respect for all. Almost all (92%) parents agree with this statement and many parents are complimentary about the efforts made by staff to create a caring and supportive environment for all. There is a strong sense of community and a commitment to the shared values of love, faith and understanding. The Charter for Catholic Schools is used to underpin improvement work, professional dialogue and training.

The school has registered as a Laudato Si' school. All classes have participated in a range of Laudato Si' activities including Laudato Si' week. Pupils have developed awareness of "caring for our common home" and some children have received Laudato Si' awards to celebrate their contributions. Upper school pupils have demonstrated faith in action in the work undertaken to achieve the Pope Francis Faith Award.

The Digital Technologies Pupil Group have created a weekly STEAM Podcast which has been shared with all classes and with the wider community on Twitter and school website. Pupil feedback indicates that this has encouraged them to view STEAM as a potential future pathway, discover the skills required for a variety of roles and to challenge stereotypes.

The school has made links with a variety of STEM Ambassadors to discuss careers in the STEAM industry and to challenge stereotypes. During British Science Week, a Royal Navy Marine Engineer, individuals from the space industry and NHS workers delivered a virtual talk and question and answer session to develop pupil understanding of the World of Work. Second level stages are working with SmartSTEMs to host a virtual event to inspire them into a STEM career path.

St. Mark's is now a Young STEM Leader delivering centre. The Acting Principal Teacher is trained as a tutor assessor, working with identified children in SIMD 1-3 to lead whole school STEM activities and events. This will allow them to become positive role models and build employability skills, confidence and resilience.

Following inputs from Learning through Landscapes Scotland on 'loose parts play' and outdoor learning, staff confidence on facilitating outdoor learning experiences has increased. The majority of teachers are beginning to make use of loose parts play when outdoors.

Homework Clubs were set up to allow pupils who required extra support to complete homework tasks. 59% of children who attended were entitled to FME and/or living within SIMD 1-3. The clubs have been well received by children and families and provide another example of how learning loss teachers have made a significant impact on engagement and attainment in the school.

Following a successful whole school approach to reduce litter in the school grounds, develop pupil knowledge of biodiversity, grow vegetables and maintain the school garden, St. Mark's were awarded their 9th Eco-Schools Green Flag. Keep Scotland Beautiful identified aspects of the application as being examples of good practice.

All classes have had opportunities for outdoor learning experiences at least once a week. Most classes have also taken part in further outdoor learning experiences each week to enhance learning where appropriate. All classes participated in Outdoor Classroom Day. Feedback from staff and children was positive and pupils were highly engaged in outdoor learning experiences.

Despite the restrictions imposed on schools due to Covid-19 risk assessments, teaching and support staff delivered after-school clubs in the final term. The clubs covered a range of activities, including dance, football, gymnastics, gardening and chess. Clubs were established at all stages and prioritised children in lower SIMD deciles. Engagement has been high and there has been positive qualitative feedback from pupils and parents.