



HMIE Follow Through

# St Mark's Primary School

October 2021



Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences

## Background

Education Scotland published a report on the standards and quality of St Mark's Primary School on 11 September 2018. The school was judged to be good in Leadership of Change, Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Raising Attainment and Achievement. The school was judged to be very good in Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion.

Following the Education Scotland inspection, the school compiled an action plan to address the main points of the report. The Education Department made plans for the Quality Improvement Service to revisit the school within two years of the date of publication to review progress and report back to parents and elected members.

A newly appointed Head Teacher took up post in January 2020, with a new leadership team being established in June 2020. Since March 2020 there has been ongoing disruption to society and schools. This has resulted in two periods of school closure, impacting on the timing of the departmental follow through visit.

A follow through visit by the Quality Improvement Team took place in October 2021.



## Overview

The school had made very good progress on the action points outlined in the HMIE report, with the following key strengths.

- The school's vision and values (Love, Faith and Understanding) permeate the life and work of the school. They are key drivers for change and improvement. There is a strong ethos of support, with a highly effective focus on nurture. This has resulted in very positive relationships across the school. All members of the school community work together in an effective way and a climate of high expectations based on mutual respect is evident. Staff demonstrate a commitment to the school's strong culture of collaboration with everyone working together to improve outcomes for all learners.
- The head teacher demonstrates strong strategic leadership of the school. He has successfully established a culture of support, learning and collaboration across the school. This has led to shared aspirations for all learners. His approach to effective distributive leadership, built on openness and trust, is a strength. He is supported by a newly established senior leadership team. Along with the head teacher, they provide supportive and effective leadership.
- There is a high level of consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the school with children's experiences evaluated as very good. In most lessons, learning is appropriately challenging and well matched to children's needs with almost all children engaged and highly motivated to succeed in their learning. In all lessons observed children understand the purpose and relevance of their learning and are enthusiastic about their skills development. There is a focus on developing outdoor learning opportunities to support learning and in recognition of the benefits of learning outdoors on wellbeing.

## Leadership of change

### *Very Good Progress*

- The school has clear and effective systems for strategic planning for improvement. The current school improvement plan clearly reflects a collective vision for improvement within the school. Priorities have a strong focus on raising attainment and recognising achievement, improving the quality and consistency of learning and teaching and inclusion and supporting pupils.
- Overall there is very good strategic leadership across the school. The head teacher and senior leadership team have created a strong culture of collaboration and leadership at all levels. The senior leadership team and all staff share a clear vision for the school and this permeates daily practice.
- All staff share a common, well-developed understanding of the school's priorities for improvement and are fully involved in taking these forward, specifically, improvements in teaching and learning pedagogy. Staff feel empowered to take on a range of leadership opportunities and demonstrate growing confidence to initiate and lead change.
- The school uses systematic self-evaluation to plan for change. Staff are reflective and use data to inform developments. Effective approaches to monitoring progress, including tracking meetings and professional dialogue, are providing all stakeholders with a clearer picture of attainment and progress over time. Senior leaders use this very well to identify and target areas for improvement.
- All staff have a good and improving understanding of the diverse social, economic and cultural context of the school and its community and are engaging in continuing professional learning to extend their use of data to develop appropriate interventions and supports for improved outcomes for all learners, including those children in key equity groups.



## Learning, Teaching and Assessment

### *Very Good Progress*

- The very positive relationships between staff and children are a significant strength of the school. Children are well behaved and demonstrate genuine respect towards staff and one another. Children are engaged in their learning and motivated to succeed. The very positive learning environment is supporting learners to contribute well in lessons and challenge themselves in their learning. In almost all lessons observed children understand the purpose and relevance of their learning and are able to talk about what they need to do to improve further.
- Learners' achievements in and out of school are recognised, recorded and celebrated. Learners take on leadership roles with enthusiasm and commitment and are beginning to lead their own learning in classrooms.
- Staff use a variety of approaches to engage learners in understanding their progress in learning. There is a range of opportunities for children to evaluate their learning and that of others through peer and self-assessment.
- Tracking and monitoring of pupil progress is well-understood and used effectively to secure improved outcomes for all learners including those learners in key equity groups. Professional dialogue supports the processes of assessment and is informing improvements in the consistency and quality of learning and teaching.



## Raising Attainment and Achievement

### Very Good Progress

- Attainment levels in literacy and numeracy are a central feature of the school's priorities for improvement. In particular the school's commitment to developing literacy across the school should be commended with its innovative approaches to programmes including Reading Recovery, Daily Literacy Learning (DLL) and Together Raising Attainment in Literacy (TRAIL). This is leading to improved outcomes for learners. All learners at all stages reported that they had a much more positive approach to reading following their experience of DLL. The school will continue to track progress in relation to these interventions using agreed benchmarking assessments to gather data and identify impact.
- Attendance levels are high and improving and there are no exclusions. Inclusion in the school is a major strength with innovative approaches to nurture providing all learners with an appropriate environment in which to learn. In particular, the development of the *Treasure Island* and the *Greenhouse* are positively impacting on children's wellbeing ensuring that all learners feel included, engaged and involved in the life of the school and are making progress in their learning.
- The school tracks learners' participation and monitors those who are at risk of missing out, to ensure that activities build on the range of talents and interests of the children. The school's Pupil Equity Fund priorities reflect the current context of the school and seek to provide opportunities for achievement of learners in key equity groups. In particular the school's focus on diversity and supporting children and families with English as an Additional Language is commendable, ensuring all stakeholders have access to the supports they need and feel part of the developing school community.
- Improving confidence in teacher judgements is leading to more informed professional dialogue. A systematic approach to using assessment evidence, including formal and informal opportunities for moderation, is in place. In focus groups teachers reported that they discussed learning and teaching regularly and were keen to collaborate and learn from each other.

## Next Steps

In partnership with the head teacher, the review team identified and agreed the following next steps:

- ▶ The head teacher and senior leaders should continue to work with all stakeholders to review and develop the identity of the school as an inclusive learning community in response to the changing demographic and reflecting the increasing diversity of the school context.
- ▶ The school should continue to systematically embed its use of self-evaluation for self-improvement to ensure improved outcomes for all learners. In particular it should continue with its focus on extending the use of data to inform appropriate interventions and supports.
- ▶ The school should continue to improve the quality of learning and teaching by looking outwards and collaborating with other schools and establishments to build on the reading and research which has already taken place.
- ▶ Staff should consider approaches to support pupils to be effectively involved in assessment, in particular, the use of self and peer assessment and teacher feedback, providing opportunities for improving children's involvement and progress in their learning.

## Recommendation

Overall the school has made very good progress in meeting the recommendations from the HMIE Report of September 2018.

The Authority has no further plans to visit the school in relation to the report of September 2018. The Quality Improvement Service and the link Quality Improvement Officer will continue to work with, support, and closely monitor the school to ensure continuous improvement.