



St Fergus Primary School Validation Report

Validation Report	
School Name: St Fergus Primary School	Name of Validator: Joanna Maclean
Bankfoot Road Ferguslie Park Paisley PA3 1LA United Kingdom	Date of Validation: 04/10/2021
Head Teacher / Principal Name: Mhairi MacDonald	Digital Technology Co-ordinator: Andrew Reid

This report includes validator's comments based on a review of the online submission and the validation visit.

- We are happy to share this report with Education Scotland: No
- Would you be willing to be contacted by the programme with the view of contributing an article/blog or other materials to help other schools on their digital journey?: No
- We are happy for Education Scotland to contact us to highlight our practice: No
- We are happy to share this report with the local authority: No

Leadership and Vision 79%

St Fergus is situated in the Ferguslie Park area of Renfrewshire, an area renowned for its severe deprivation. The current Headteacher (HT), Mrs Mhairi McDonald, has been in situ since 2015 and is largely responsible for the continued digital learning journey. She is fully engaged and provides clear and determined leadership in driving the use of digital technologies across the school. Mrs McDonald's digital vision for the school was realised by creating a dedicated Digital Leader (DL) post. Mr Andrew Reid, who has a confessed love of digital and a passion for sharing his knowledge, was the obvious choice. Part of Mr Reid's role involves working with staff to improve confidence and skills in the classroom, and he has the responsibility for driving digital learning forward.

The school was recently housed in a new building (2018), which upgraded their technical infrastructure and provision. The leadership, and subsequent vision, drive, and passion from the HT and DL have ensured an extremely positive start to their digital learning journey, ensuring that Digital Technologies are integrated into the School Improvement Plan (SIP), and actions and expected impacts are clearly stated, along with appropriate time frames and designated lead staff. All areas from learning, teaching, assessment, reporting to parents, tracking, and monitoring, and transitions are all aspirational in identifying ways that digital technology can be integrated and how these can be used effectively to enhance learning and teaching across the curriculum.

Teachers clearly feel empowered to innovate and share how they use software and hardware to support learning, which was evident in the SIP. Their drive and vision are translated into a range of opportunities for exploring how technology can enhance learning throughout the school and develop its profile. The provision of a dedicated, enthusiastic staff member to drive effective use of digital technologies has ensured that not only are learners excited and motivated to learn, but staff are developing their confidence and skills to teach digital technologies; a win-win! I would recommend that this model of providing a dedicated DL is shared within the region and nationally as it showcases the tremendous gains that can be made in a short period of time. My one concern with this model is sustainability; I have suggested that the DL empowers others to have the responsibility of strands, areas, software etc., to ensure the long-term success of digital technologies.

The digital learning and teaching strategy is in draft format but is already a fully formed and beneficial document and is informed by both national and local authority policy and guidelines, including up-to-date guidance, e.g. 'What Digital Learning Might Look Like' (Education Scotland 2020).

Policies and plans are reviewed regularly and systematically and are derived from evidence, e.g., audits, surveys, questionnaires, classroom observations. One method I particularly liked was 'Trios', which involved a member from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), a class teacher, and a pupil observing classroom lessons for discussion and improvement. I loved using the pupil's voice in this scenario; the HT reinforced this by saying how powerful they found this approach.

Over the past two years, the school has implemented a successful programme CLPL in digital technologies. This has happened at LA, cluster, whole school, stage, and individual level. Staff commented that the support and coaching provided by the DL have been exceptionally beneficial.

The school has Digital Leaders (pupil) who support staff and deliver content throughout the year to both pupils and parents.

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Use of Digital Technology to Deliver the Curriculum 76%

Due to the limitations of the validation visit being a remote visit, I did not have had the opportunity to

experience technology in action, but I was able to talk with some highly motivated teachers to hear about their experiences. I heard and saw illustrated many examples of high-quality learning throughout the school and teachers were all growing in confidence and appreciating the support given to them by the DL as it enables them to embed digital technologies across the curriculum. It should be noted that the priority for the school was to deliver rich learning experiences for all pupils, which could include digital technologies where it enhanced learning, but was not used just because it was there. The learning content was paramount, and technology was used as a support tool.

I heard about a huge range of examples of technology and how this supported their learning and spurred them on to independently explore digital technology further. There are a great number of clubs, events and collaborations identified with some notable ones including castle design, shoebox challenge and the young engineering club which saw them win the competition. Mrs Joan Coyle should be commended for her enthusiasm and continual aspiration to challenge and motivate learners in the STEM area.

There is a clear demonstrable impact on learning and teaching in St Fergus through the use of digital technologies. Both the pupils and teachers I spoke to were able to evaluate and justify the impact that such technologies have had on both learning and teaching. Teachers also commented on how prepared and supported they were throughout lockdown with every learner having access to Google and/or Seesaw.

The school is to be commended for its purposeful engagement of learners during the lockdown. During the first lockdown engagement levels were less than 10% and with due diligence, persistence including phoning parents, creating engaging activities and ensuring learners, staff and parents had the confidence and support to use online learning saw engagement rise to a 64% high during the second lockdown.

There is a range of examples of teachers and learners engaging with digital technologies creatively and effectively. Teachers talked about the autonomy they were afforded to use digital tools to enhance remote learning, collect data via forms and collaborate on planning documents online. Learners discussed open-ended creative projects e.g., photography manipulation, making and editing iMovie's, programming Micro-bits and Sphero's, coding and designing projects through various coding sites/apps. The children have ample opportunities to create content through a range of media.

Pupils are independent, enthusiastic, and keen to learn with and through technology. Even the youngest children can log onto Chromebooks and iPad successfully. From P1 upwards they all have an email account and access to their Google Class, which the HT monitors. With the experience and help of the DL staff are providing learning experiences that support the transfer of digital skills across the curriculum.

Assistive technologies are utilised across all stages, to support learners and facilitate more effective and meaningful differentiation. Learners requiring additional support have access to Mrs Mary Hunter who can work with ASN learners remotely using screen sharing, Nessy, interactive resources e.g., Kahoot

I saw clear evidence that digital technology has been embedded effectively across the whole curriculum, notably Mrs Michelle Gray, who talked passionately about the activities taking place in Primary 1. I particularly loved the 'tinkering' with technology and the wonderful online nursery transition page with videos and resources for new nursery children called 'Starting School'.

Pupils were able to clearly articulate the impact of their use of digital technology on their own learning, and as importantly, the enjoyment they took from the school's immersion in digital technologies. The staff were equally articulate about the impacts of digital technologies on their teaching day-to-day. All staff commented on the support from leadership and in particular the dedicated DL.

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School Culture 75%

I feel the school have come a long way in their digital journey and they have formed a very strong staff team who recognise the educational benefits digital technology brings to teaching and learning and want to prepare their pupils to be able to function in the ever-changing digital world of the future. The use of digital technology to support and enhance learning across the school is very strong. This is a result of a wide range of CLPL opportunities and collaborative working. There was evidence of a variety of digital technologies being used very effectively. I felt the children had a sound understanding of the tools they were using and knew how they could apply these in different ways.

Teachers reported the use of digital technology motivated children and engaged more children in learning. Learning is enhanced by a range of digital experiences which have been embraced by all and the children have become leaders in the promotion of this culture. There is a strong culture throughout the staff team in the use and application of digital technologies and this has been strategically and purposefully cultivated by the HT and DL.

The school website is very informative and has some excellent links for parents. Pupils share their learning in school and Google classrooms which I was unable to access due to security measures. There is also a School app, Youtube channel, Facebook, Twitter page which shares important updates and messages and promotes and celebrates the work of the school.

Staff make effective use of digital technology for their own planning and administration which they felt streamlined their workflow. Google classroom was taking over from Seesaw and staff had been trained in their use and were harnessing the capabilities of shared documents, accessing files anywhere, anytime from Google Drive. Staff were making good use of Google to communicate and ensure everyone was included in information distribution and had access to the most up to date documents. Planning documents, individual pupil plans and tracking information were all online and could easily be pulled up, discussed, amended as required and saved or distributed to the appropriate people.

The positive ethos and values of the school extend fully to celebrating the successes of their pupils in the use of digital technologies. In addition to sharing their progress with parents and carers through Seesaw and Google, whole school assemblies and the school's app, Facebook and Twitter feeds are used as platforms to recognise and showcase learners' use of technology. Children have opportunities both within and out with school to add these achievements to their Seesaw/Google classroom.

This is a school where everyone is working cohesively to ensure the children are experiencing a quality digital technologies curriculum. There is a strong culture of collaboration and autonomy for self-directed learning, where Digital Leaders are teaching their peers and the teachers; teachers are teaching themselves, their pupils, and their colleagues. The DL is feeding into everything whilst drawing on self-directed and external training to do this. This model is moving the school forward at a good pace.

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Professional Development 83%

A range of core and optional training had been offered to the staff. Most staff opted into additional training and were integrating these new skills into classroom practice. The training was available through the LA, in-house and one-to-one peer support. Teachers have engaged in CLPL to meet the school's current priorities of using the Promethean boards effectively, Thinglink, iPads, Clickview, Glow blogs and implementing Google classroom.

There is a recognition that teachers are at different stages in their digital skills journey and while there is core and supplementary training, as well as peer support for all, some teachers are self-directed and are exploring ways of integrating digital learning even further. As they share new learning, this will provide leadership opportunities, which will also ensure the sustainability of the digital skills programme.

The School's Digital Leader has played an extremely proactive role in ensuring that staff are kept up to date with the ever-changing face of technology. He keeps abreast of professional practice by attending external training, reading relevant documents and she shares this with others within the school.

As with the curriculum, and as with teaching and learning day-to-day, the digital technologies are very clearly embedded in much of the school's approach to professional development. The school makes quite exceptional use of a broad range of applications and resources with respect to professional development both in and about digital technology. There is a comprehensive programme of professional learning available for all staff and teachers are encouraged to explore online or external learning. There is evidence of collaborative learning which was also driving teachers' digital skills forward.

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Resources and Infrastructure 93%

Children use a variety of technology daily to support and enhance learning. Teachers recognise the educational value of digital technology and exploit these effectively. The school currently have thirty iPads and sixty Chromebooks. Each class has one 'class iPad', and the spare ones are timetabled out. Every stage has access to a Promethean board with the capability to link to iPads to share knowledge, skills, and learning. The school has a range of hands-on resources, e.g., Spheros, BEEBots, BBC Micro: bits, Marty robots.

Glow is being used in school and at home. Google Classroom (and Seesaw) is being used in classes to set homework and communicate with children. Pupils were aware of logging into their Google classroom at home and continuing working on a file stored in their Drive. Pupils were able to select the most appropriate tool to create new content or evidence their learning in their preferred way. Pupils were encouraged to add evidence and impact of learning into their Google classroom to track their learning and to share with parents at home.

The school utilises a broad range of software and digital applications to provide a rich and diverse, cross-curricular learning experience for its pupils at all stages. There is a good range of software in use across the school, including some to support learners with ASN. The school has enhanced provision and has built up expertise in the use of assistive technologies. Staff were very familiar with the needs of all learners and could tailor the range of adaptive settings within the devices to each individual, e.g., background colours, voice recording, and the immersive reader tools.

Teachers recognise the educational value of digital resources and exploit these effectively. They make good use of the resources available and where opportunities are sought to keep up to date with digital technologies to support learning. The school is well resourced, and it has prioritised expenditure so that digital resources can be more embedded in teaching and learning.

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General Recommendations:

I am delighted to recommend St Fergus for the Digital Schools Award.

Signed

Joanna S. Maclean

Joanna Maclean
External validator

