

# St. John's RC High School



## Report of Extended Review 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014

Dear Colleagues

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your preparation and involvement in the school's recent extended review.

Quality Improvement in Dundee is set within a framework of proportionate support and challenge. Each year a number of schools are selected to participate in the extended review process. The purpose of the extended review is to validate the school's self-evaluation and to help the school secure continuous improvement by supporting and challenging educational provision and development.

During the time the Education Team spent within the school, it gathered information by:

- Reviewing and analysing attainment and whole school data;
- Talking to the HT, SMT and staff;
- Talking to learners, parents/carers;
- Observing aspects of learning and teaching;
- Reading and analysing relevant documentation – e.g. policies, plans, pupil documentation/information, roles and remits, audit evidence, record of collegiate time etc.;
- Sampling learners' work

The following report outlines the strengths and aspects for development as an outcome of the review. An Action Plan will be formulated by the school to address the development needs highlighted by this report which will continue to be monitored and evaluated by the Head Teacher and the school's link Education Officer.

I look forward to your continued commitment in securing these improvements to enable us collectively to deliver a quality educational experience in which all children and young people aspire to reach the highest personal levels of attainment and achievement.

Regards



Michael Wood  
Director of Education

## **St. John's RC High School Extended Review Report – September 2014**

### **How well do young people learn and achieve?**

#### **2.1 Learners' Experiences**

##### **Level: 5 (Very Good)**

From the 50+ learning episodes observed, we found that, overall, young people learn and achieve very well through a rich range of experiences. They feel safe, nurtured, respected and included and are proud to be part of the family of St. John's. At all stages, relationships between staff and young people are consistently positive and high expectations communicated as part of the school ethos. In almost all classes, young people are well behaved and engaged in their learning. Most young people enjoy learning and have very positive experiences across the school. They feel that they are treated with fairness and respect and view staff as caring and approachable.

There are notable strengths in the way that young people learn and achieve, with the pace of learning generally good. In most lessons, young people are clear about the aims of learning and know how to be successful. Whilst some good practice was noted in teachers generating success criteria with pupils, teachers should continue to provide opportunities for learners to reflect on and evaluate their learning. In a range of classes, young people benefit from opportunities to work together in pairs or groups. In some lessons, there could be more opportunities for young people to be independent and take responsibility for their learning. Over 30 staff have been trained in co-operative learning strategies, with 3 members of staff now trained as trainers. Where this was observed, it had a positive impact on pupils' engagement in and enjoyment of their own learning. In a number of learning episodes, young people worked together very well on collaborative tasks but there is a need for these approaches to be more widespread across the school.

Pupils are supported to reflect on their learning and skills through approaches including; the clear articulation of learning intentions; lesson planning and evaluation; use of e-portfolios and learning logs. Pupils are encouraged to access study support. Parents would welcome further advice on supporting young people in their learning including greater clarity and consistency with regard to homework.

Significant numbers of young people are confidently leading activities which support their peers. They told us that involvement in the 'Peer Educator' and 'Buddy' programmes helps to develop their own confidence and self-esteem and supports them in developing these skills in others. Young people are responsible and contribute very effectively to the life of the school and the wider community by taking on roles of responsibility through a range of activities such as the Pupil Council, charity fundraising, Sports Ambassadors, S6 volunteers, Paired Reading project, RESPECT group, etc. Some young people think more could be done to keep them informed about the achievements of the Pupil Council and how more pupils can get involved. They are developing a strong understanding of their responsibilities as global citizens through a range of international links, notably with India.

The school is working hard to enable young people to develop a broad range of skills for learning, life and work by participating in cultural, musical, sporting, volunteering and leadership activities and events.

## **Strengths**

- Almost all young people benefit significantly from a wide range of high quality learning experiences
- A very caring, supportive and inclusive learning environment
- Very positive relationships between staff, pupils and parents
- Responsible, courteous, well behaved and confident young people
- Learners have a positive attitude to learning and are focussed and engaged in the majority of lessons observed
- The young people have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles

## **Aspects for development**

- Continue to encourage young people to take increased responsibility for their own learning
- Encourage the consolidation, sharing and extension of co-operative learning strategies
- Extend opportunities for learners to reflect on and evaluate their learning e.g. by developing a whole school approach around learning conversations
- Continue to develop pupil profiling and the e-portfolio with greater focus on increasing pupil awareness of and confidence in their skills development

## **1.1 Improvements in Performance**

### **Level: 4/5 (Good / Very Good)**

Over a three year period (2010/11-2012/13), there have been improvements in pupils' attainment. By the end of S4, in some measures such as 5+ SCQF Level 3 and 5+ SCQF Level 4, improvement is evident. In 2013, by the end of S6, attainment at 5 or more awards at SCQF level 6 was the highest since 2001. In 2014, by the end of S6, the school has performed better than its virtual comparator at SCQF Levels 4 and 5 in Literacy & Numeracy. In the first diet of new national qualifications, no fewer than 6 subjects achieved a 100% pass rate at National 5 with both English and Spanish achieving significant positive relative values. Over a 2 year period (2011/12-2012/13), the number of young people moving on to a sustained positive destination when leaving school is equivalent to, or better than, the school's virtual comparator.

Although most young people are making suitable progress from S1 to S3, attainment data over the most recent three year period (current S3/4/5 pupils) indicates an inconsistent pattern in the value added within the areas of mathematics, reading and science.

Young people achieve significant success in a wide range of activities including: Saltire Award, Duke of Edinburgh, St. Vincent de Paul. There are a notable number of young people undertaking the national Caritas Award programme and a large increase in the number of pupils seeking a place on the Peer Education/Healthy Transitions programme. Many young people have achieved success in a range of sports and musical activities with a number receiving international recognition.

### **Strengths**

- The school's ongoing drive and commitment to raise levels of pupil achievement and attainment
- The contribution of the school's successful, confident and responsible young people to the corporate life of the school and the wider community
- Attainment levels by the end of S6
- Attainment of the lowest 20% by the end of S6
- The school's approach to the development of literacy and numeracy including the work being undertaken with the Cluster primary schools

### **Aspects for development**

- Develop a consistent approach to tracking pupils' wider achievement
- Provide opportunities for young people to further develop their profiling skills to support their transition beyond school
- Continue to build capacity amongst staff to analyse data which informs improvement
- Continue the rigorous focus on improving attainment including providing challenge and support to departments which consistently demonstrate negative relative values

## **How well does the school support young people to develop and learn?**

### **5.1 The Curriculum**

#### **Level: 5 (Very Good)**

The Curriculum is planned with the child at the centre. The school provides a curriculum that offers young people opportunities to achieve, as well as opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. Curricular provision across the BGE and Senior Phase is based on the desire to improve outcomes for young people enabling progression to positive and sustained destinations.

Course plans indicate that courses within S1-3 are designed around the Es and Os and principles and practices of CfE. In planning, staff have considered how to help young people develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as well as focusing on skills for life, learning and work. A whole school drive on planning for learning, teaching and assessment has resulted in the curriculum being a high priority. All staff are engaged in curriculum design and consultation is wide spread.

There is a recognition that young people are given opportunities to make connections across their learning through a number of IDL activities such as the Garden Project/Outdoor Learning and the Radio Station.

There are very effective cluster working arrangements and the curriculum is viewed as a 3-18 progression. Transition arrangements from primary to secondary are carefully planned and extremely well co-ordinated. These experiences continue to develop and provide continuity and progression across a number of curricular areas resulting in an enriched transition for the children. Reciprocal professional support visits and sharing of resources across the cluster effectively support ongoing improvements.

The rationale of the S3 curriculum prepares young people for transition to the senior phase by allowing a degree of specialisation and depth, whilst retaining an element of breadth. Overall, the development of the curriculum is underpinned by the school's commitment to continuously review learning, teaching and assessment.

The formation of the Positive Destinations Policy Group has effectively consolidated a number of related work streams enabling a strategic overview to ensure young people gain the necessary employability skills to support them into future destinations.

In the Senior Phase, there have been recent developments to introduce vocational based learning in areas such as Media, Practical Electronics, Hospitality and Personal Finance. The school now needs to build on this further to ensure flexible and appropriate pathways for all young people are available.

Whilst the commitment of staff towards Tutor Time in forming and developing positive relationships with young people is evident, this area requires further review and evaluation.

## **Strengths**

- The school's collegiate approach to its curriculum vision, design and development
- Curricular transition arrangements at key stages which support a coherent learning experience and progression in learning
- An increasing use of data to inform further developments leading to improvements eg numeracy, literacy
- Recognition of the value of skills development in all learning contexts
- Robust whole school and departmental policies for internal verification procedures

## **Aspects for development**

- Continue to review the nature of the BGE and in particular S3 provision in line with Dundee City Council Curriculum Guidelines and Education Scotland's Advice Note (2014/15)
- Continue to develop the senior phase curriculum taking account, in due course, of Scottish Government's response to the Wood Commission Report with particular reference to the engagement of parents and partner organisations
- Further engage employer partners to ensure that young people develop an understanding of the relevance of the skills for life, learning and work which are embedded within the planning process
- Explore the potential within the school's approaches to monitoring and tracking pupil progress to further highlight the connections across the four contexts of learning
- Evaluate and review the rationale and purpose of Tutor Time and communicate the outcomes of this to pupils, staff and parents/carers

### **5.3 Meeting Learning Needs**

#### **Level: 5 (Very Good)**

The school's approaches to meeting the learning needs of pupils, including pupils with additional support needs, are typified by major strengths with few areas for improvement. Effective leadership by members of staff, at all levels within the school's broad pupil support team, is most evident.

Within a caring and highly supportive learning environment, staff provide the majority of pupils with appropriate tasks, activities and resources commensurate with their ability. Staff demonstrate an excellent knowledge of, and compassion for, young people and place pupils' wellbeing at the core of their work. In continuing to improve school approaches towards 'getting it right for every child', scope exists, however, for staff to more fully exploit the helpful information and advice provided by support for learning staff, to better differentiate pupils' individual learning experiences in accordance with their differing abilities and aptitudes. The continued strategic roll out of ABL (Addressing Barriers to Learning) and the engagement of all staff in its use will be instrumental in extending the breadth and depth of classroom interventions to support all learners and their achievements.

A broad range of talented pupil support staff including: guidance staff, support for learning teachers, additional support needs assistants, early years practitioners, pupil support workers, link education services personnel and others, make a significant contribution to meeting the learning needs of pupils, many of whom experience significant barriers to their learning.

#### **Strengths**

- The leadership, management and delivery of whole-school procedures for supporting pupils including those with additional support needs
- Staff knowledge and understanding of individual pupils, commitment towards monitoring and promoting pupils' wellbeing and approaches to meeting pupils' learning needs
- The quality of service provision provided by specialist staff in meeting pupils' learning needs including those requiring additional support to address complex barriers to learning
- The quality of support provided to 'able' learners attending the SFA Performance School
- The management of information to support learners/learning and it's accessibility to staff
- The quality of the school's comprehensive primary/ secondary transition programmes including enhanced transition arrangements and the involvement of peer educators
- The school's procedures for assessment and staged intervention, within the GIRFEC framework, including a highly effective School Support Team
- The coordination, effectiveness and flexibility of partnership working, within and beyond education services, towards getting it right for every child

## **Aspects for development**

- In striving towards the school's inclusive aims, consolidate and extend class teachers' approaches to differentiating learning in better meeting the individual learning needs of learners
- In support of the above and the on-going development of inclusive classrooms, take forward existing plans for the strategic roll out of ABLe across the school learning community with a particular focus on ABLe conversations
- Further enhance existing good approaches to the continuum of integrated pupil support streams (Guidance, SfL, ASN, Subjects, community groups etc.) through activities including: joint strategic planning, flexibility of staff deployment, whole- team CLPL / staff capacity building and resource management for staff and pupils
- In taking forward plans to evaluate and further develop Read Write Inc, ensure the location of the programme within a literacy rich environment consistent with the literacy responsibilities of all staff
- Align current School Support Team planning and recording paperwork with the child's plan to avoid duplication and promote shared understanding of agreed outcomes

## **How well does the school improve the quality of its work?**

### **5.9 Improvement through self-evaluation**

#### **Level: 5 (Very Good)**

The Head Teacher provides excellent leadership promoting a very clear sense of vision and direction across the school and its community. The highly effective Senior Management Team is very well regarded by staff, parents, young people and partner agencies.

St John's RC High School sets high standards and expectations for all pupils and staff built upon a bedrock of Gospel/Marist values against which they constantly measure themselves. All staff are very committed to improving outcomes for young people. The school has a good range of approaches for improving its work including a well organised programme of lesson observations involving senior managers, Primary Cluster Head Teachers and staff. Some departments have developed highly effective approaches to improving outcomes through self-evaluation based upon a developing IT solution.

Effective arrangements exist for staff to share good practice and to develop new skills with particularly well-structured collegiate opportunities. There is a strong commitment to Career-Long Professional Learning and developing leadership at all levels e.g. staff leading assemblies, policy groups and school in-service; participation in the Middle Leadership development programme and co-operative learning academies. Staff representation on school, authority and national groups supports self-evaluation activity and informs related school improvements.

Within its learning community, the school makes effective use of data to identify areas for development and plan next steps to secure improvement. The school is currently developing use of the 'Insight' Tool to support whole school analysis of attainment data leading to improvements in learning and teaching.

#### **Strengths**

- Effective and well-embedded self evaluation systems and practices, involving a wide range of stakeholders, for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision
- The commitment and disposition of school staff and departments to evaluate and improve practice e.g. Strategic DMs
- Staff leadership of and participation in policy groups
- Cluster joint professional learning opportunities

#### **Aspects for development**

- Build on existing robust self evaluation procedures by further engagement of pupils, parents and partners in the school's evaluation process
- Continue to take forward the school's approaches to monitoring and tracking learners' progress and achievement in the BGE
- Consider the development of Learning Rounds as part of the school's journey to excellence
- Review the effectiveness of existing arrangements for communicating school improvements and other matters to parents/carers