

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL REVIEW

# ST AUGUSTINE'S RC HIGH SCHOOL

MARCH 2006

•EDINBURGH•  
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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## THE SCHOOL IN CONTEXT

St Augustine's RC High School is a denominational secondary school built in 1969 and serves the area of west Edinburgh. It draws most of its pupils from five cluster primaries as well as over 20 primary schools. The catchment area comprises Fox Covert RC, St Joseph's RC, St David's RC, St Cuthbert's RC, St Margaret's RC Primary Schools.

The school building is in need of replacement as it suffers from high maintenance costs and inadequate insulation. The accommodation does not fully meet the needs of pupils. The school grounds include a range of football and rugby pitches which are used by the school as well as the local community.

The current school roll is 797. Eight non-district requests were made for places in S1 and 18 district pupils enrolled in other authority schools. The resulting S1 roll was 130.

Absence rates for 2003–2004 was 22 half days per pupil. This compares with authority and national averages of 37. There were 23 formal exclusions during 2003–2004.

The pupil: teacher ratio is 13 :1.

The senior management team (SMT) consists of the headteacher (HT), 3 full time equivalent (FTE) depute headteachers (DHT) and the business manager. In addition, 19.59 FTE support staff are allocated to a range of whole-school responsibilities.

Senior staff and all members of the teaching staff have taken part in the authority's professional review scheme. Most members of the support staff have been reviewed. The school plans to have all the support staff reviewed by April 2006.

The pupil unit cost for 2004–2005 was £4083, compared to authority and national averages of £4067 and £4042 respectively. There is a School Board and parent teacher association (PTA).

## PUPIL ATTAINMENT

National testing in reading, writing and mathematics is fully established. The school's current performance in relation to national 5–14 attainment targets is:

	2003	2004	2005	2005 Target
Reading	39%	66%	54%	64%
Writing	29%	44%	46%	56%
Mathematics	63%	59%	43%	54%

The school's performance in relation to national attainment targets was as follows:

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Key:

Level 7:	Advanced Higher A–C
Level 6:	Higher at A–C
Level 5:	Intermediate A–C; Standard Grade at 1–2
Level 4:	Intermediate 1 at A–C; Standard Grade at 3–4
Level 3:	Access 3 Cluster; Standard Grade at 5–6

	'01–'03	'02–'04	'03–'05	2005 Target
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained SCQF level 3 or better both English and Mathematics	89%	86%	88%	94%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 5 or more awards at SCQF level 3 or better	90%	87%	89%	95%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 5 or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better	79%	76%	75%	80%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better	44%	43%	44%	48%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 1 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better	45%	44%	46%	47%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 3 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better	32%	30%	31%	34%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 5 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better	21%	18%	20%	22%

During 2004–2005, 25 pupils, 19 of whom have a Record of Needs, were referred to psychological services.

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## REVIEW PROCEDURES

St Augustine's RC High School was reviewed by a team from the Quality Development and Neighbourhood Management Groups of the Children and Families Department during November 2005. The review was based on the school's own standards and quality (S&Q) report for session 2004-2005.

The review programme, based on the S&Q report June 2005 comprised two key areas:

- ✿ support for pupils;
- ✿ management, leadership and quality assurance;

plus the authority theme:

- ✿ continuity and progression in learning including transitions.

The review team considered statements made by the school about two key areas based on the S&Q report, along with the authority theme, and made their evaluation on the basis of their own observations and evidence provided by the school. The results of their findings are given below as a commentary on the school's report.

In order to make their evaluation, the team consulted a number of documents, including the school improvement plan, interviewed samples of pupils, staff and parents, and observed learning and teaching. In total, 35 lessons were observed. A questionnaire was issued to a sample of parents.

One hundred and sixty questionnaires were sent to parents, a further one questionnaire was requested and 41 were returned.

### PARENTS'/CARERS' VIEWS

Almost all parents/carers said that the school was well led, their child enjoyed being at school, and they were satisfied with the communication they had with the school about their child's progress and advice on providing support at home.

Most parents/carers said that their child found the school work stimulating and challenging and they were encouraged to work to the best of their ability. They were satisfied with the homework their child received, and felt that the school provided an environment with a good reputation where they were treated fairly and supported in their learning.

The majority of parents/carers felt that the teachers really knew their child as an individual and were good at letting them know about their child's strengths and weaknesses.

## FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

### 1 SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

The review team agreed with the following statements from the school's S&Q report:

- ✿ The quality of pastoral care is very good. All staff work collaboratively to maintain a climate of mutual trust and respect.
- ✿ Guidance and support for learning (SfL) staff give full support to families and carers and keep staff informed about relevant information to help pupils learning.
- ✿ Audits in citizenship and enterprise have taken place, initiated by the two principal teachers of guidance on whose remits these initiatives lie.
- ✿ Staff offer a wide range of extra curricular activities with sports and music having a particularly high profile.
- ✿ Our S4 pupils continue to gain valuable, vocational experience through our work experience programme and especially with the formal interview session, prior to the week out of school. Over 20 businesses send a representative to interview the pupils.
- ✿ SfL staff continue to employ a range of roles effectively, including well-planned and effective tutorials and cooperative teaching. Well developed individualised educational programmes (IEPs) address pupils' needs.

- ✿ SfL staff are knowledgeable about current legislation and have implemented recommendations from the 'Additional Support for Learning Act'.

Overall, the quality of support for pupils was very good.

### Strengths in support for pupils

The school operated effective policies and procedures which supported and protected pupils. These had been agreed with all staff who were fully aware of the policies and worked collectively to create a climate where mutual trust, respect and confidence were evident throughout the school. In particular, procedures for dealing with bullying, racial incidents and drug misuse were well understood by staff and pupils.

The guidance team demonstrated a high quality of pastoral care towards pupils, and used a planned calendar to help with early intervention, and structured interviews with systematic and effective recording of information. Pupils' needs and concerns were dealt with sensitively and pupils were secure in the knowledge that their concerns had been dealt with properly and confidentially.

Support team meetings had been established to ensure that information could be shared by guidance, behaviour support and SfL. This allowed the provision of joint strategies which most effectively met the needs of pupils and families. There was also a comprehensive programme of family interviews throughout the year where all staff, including appropriate partner agencies, worked together to secure the best possible outcomes for all.

The school provided a range of planned and inter-related approaches to developing pupils' personal and social skills. The topics involved in the current personal and social education (PSE) programmes covered all of the main issues

related to personal development, respect for others and tolerance. Teachers were committed to promoting whole-school strategies and common expectations of behaviour were applied consistently across the school. The school provided frequent and regular opportunities for pupils to be praised and for their achievements to be recognised and valued. The school awards system was highly commended by pupils who felt that its consistent application across the school engendered positive attitudes and behaviour.

The whole school audits in enterprise and citizenship, which had been undertaken over the last two years, demonstrated the wide range of pupil involvement in activities which allowed them to take responsibility and play an active part in the life of the school. These opportunities had allowed pupils to develop self-esteem and confidence in their own knowledge and skills.

Pupils had been given opportunities and encouragement to participate in a very wide range of extra-curricular and other activities. Staff gave generously of their own time and there was wide participation from pupils with many competing at local and national level.

Pupils were supported by very good curricular and vocational guidance. They had access to clear, accurate and up-to-date information and advice about further learning opportunities and career choices. The well-organised careers education part of the S1 to S6 PSE programme, and the collaborative approach of the careers adviser and the guidance staff ensured that all pupils had excellent opportunities to discuss the range of relevant options.

There was a challenging and comprehensive work experience programme for all S4 pupils with very good links with local employers and businesses. These contacts had allowed the development of planned mock interviews for pupils prior to their work experience placements.

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The programmes of work within the SfL department had been well developed and differentiated to meet individual needs. There was a varied range of resources to support the programmes including a number of information and communications technology (ICT) programmes to support learning in literacy and numeracy. Pupils were confident the programmes of work they followed had improved their skills in these areas.

All pupils in S1 had taken part in a differentiated homework programme delivered by SfL staff to improve spelling and vocabulary skills. Pupils' progress was monitored and the programme evaluated to ensure progress in these areas.

A group of more able pupils in S2 had been identified and the SfL department delivered a course to develop their thinking skills.

Pupils with additional support needs used ICT extensively for word processing across the curriculum. The processes and systems for pupils to take responsibility for their own work, including electronic storage, were effective and pupils were encouraged to demonstrate independence.

There were high expectations of achievement for pupils with additional support needs. Pupils had responded well to the targets set for each period in the SfL base and were motivated to complete the work set. All pupils using the SfL base used the time effectively to support other subject areas. The amount of time spent on other subject areas increased as pupils progressed through the school. The achievement and attainment of pupils with additional support needs across the school was very good taking account of their needs.

The SfL team fulfilled a range of roles to support pupils' learning. These included:

- ❁ cooperative teaching;
- ❁ curriculum development to support departments with differentiation;

- ❁ paired reading with senior students;
- ❁ continuing professional development (CPD) for all staff including information on alternative assessment arrangements;
- ❁ the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act;
- ❁ the provision of readers and scribes and individualised programmes of work; and
- ❁ in class support for identified pupils.

Learning assistants were used effectively and had made a very positive contribution to supporting individual pupils and groups of pupils to ensure that pupils participated in class lessons and progressed.

SfL staff had a clear understanding of the current legislation and were looking ahead to the imminent implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act.

IEPs were in place and there were well developed processes for setting and evaluating targets with subject departments. The review of targets and discussions with parents for each year group was planned for key times throughout the session including at times of course choice.

### Areas for development in support for pupils

The school should strengthen the very good work of the pupil support group (PSG) by ensuring a more robust system of monitoring and documenting the proceedings of the group.

The opportunity to attend the homework club should be extended to S3 and S4 and a more proactive approach should be taken to encourage pupils to take advantage of revision classes and summer school provision.

The integrated work of the SMT, guidance and SfL teams should continue to be developed to ensure systems and procedures to meet pupils' needs are clear to all staff. The work and remits of teams should continue to be reviewed

to ensure clear areas of expertise, effective communication and to avoid duplication of information.

The development of long term targets within IEPs should ensure that they are only set over one session. Staff involved should continue to develop more specific and incremental short term targets which will allow the long term targets to be achieved.

## 2 MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The review team agreed with the following statements from the school's S&Q report:

- ❖ SMT takes a strategic approach to leading school improvement by ensuring that policies are monitored effectively to effect change.
- ❖ Recently SMT remits have been reviewed to take account of the needs of the school.
- ❖ There are regular formal and informal links by SMT with departments which promotes an atmosphere of support and challenge.
- ❖ There is a growing sense of reflection and self-evaluation through a programme of systematic analysis of pupil performances.
- ❖ Opportunities have been created for a range of staff to ensure a sense of distributed leadership through appropriate delegation.

Overall, the quality of management, leadership and quality assurance was very good.

### Strengths in management, leadership and quality assurance

Staff had a clear understanding of school aims, core purposes, values and how these were being taken forward. Consultation on new developments was inclusive and thorough with clear actions identified for key staff and groups. The aims had an appropriate focus on improving the quality of pupils' learning experiences and maximising standards of attainment. This was

demonstrated through the current focus on learning and teaching strategies where certain methodologies were consistently applied in classes across the school.

Staff had taken an active role in the development of policies and guidelines through their participation in working groups. Parents and pupils had also been consulted through the School Board and the Student Representative Council.

Staff had been involved in self-evaluation at departmental and whole school level. The SMT had taken a reflective and systematic approach to self-evaluation with a clear focus on improving the quality of pupils' experiences and standards of achievement and attainment. Almost all departments had adopted a wide range of strategies and methods for monitoring, recording and evaluating their effectiveness. These included classroom observation, tracking of attainment, sampling of pupils' work and monitoring homework.

There were well-established procedures for the SMT to monitor the effectiveness of departments. In addition to comprehensive systems of classroom observation and tracking of attainment, a member of the SMT was linked to each subject department to assist improvement and to enhance communication. The presence of the SMT link at departmental meetings fostered staff inclusion and allowed the promotion of consistent implementation of school policies, self-evaluation and improvements.

The annual S&Q report was clear and contained evaluative statements for each of the key areas of the school's work. There were very good arrangements for including promoted and unpromoted staff in an audit process which subsequently developed ownership of the reporting process.

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The improvement plan was well organised and provided a clear account of aims, audit and planned action. The plan contained a range of well-judged priorities that linked well to local and national priorities. Departmental plans linked well with the school plan and were well-organised with realistic tasks and timescales.

The impact of the improvement plan on the work of the school was notable. Progress on the implementation of priorities in previous plans was evident and the quality of the pupils' experiences had improved. The plans had been used to monitor developments to ensure good progress was being made to meet the current objectives.

The school was very well led. The HT provided clear direction and possessed a range of positive personal qualities and strong interpersonal skills which imparted confidence and motivated others. He enjoyed a high level of personal and professional credibility among staff, parents and pupils and displayed high levels of competence and commitment allied to a range of contemporary knowledge and skills.

Almost all principal teachers provided very good and supportive leadership of their departments. They managed change effectively and used the structured meetings with SMT and departmental staff to discuss issues and formulate next steps in delivering planned improvement. All departments had a contemporary handbook which provided an accurate reflection of the work and organisation of the department.

Promoted staff had well-defined remits which were well understood by other staff. These staff shared responsibilities and worked as a team to ensure the best possible support and experiences for pupils.

The SMT were highly visible and their support in areas such as the induction of new staff and their support of the self-evaluation process was much appreciated by staff. They regularly visited

classrooms on a formal and informal basis as part of a comprehensive monitoring programme and provided support for the current policies and developments.

### **Areas for development in management, leadership and quality assurance**

The role of the Student Council should be further developed to allow pupils to contribute more extensively to the planning and implementation of school improvement and to develop a more inclusive and proactive pupil voice.

Departments should continue to develop their systematic quality assurance strategies to ensure a consistently high level of monitoring and self-evaluation across the whole school.

The SMT's link role should be strengthened and focused to ensure the self-evaluation processes within the link departments use systematic and rigorous procedures which will support the identification of strengths and priority areas for action.

The good practice in monitoring pupils' learning experiences carried out by the SMT should continue to be developed. This should involve the development of a systematic programme with a clear focus to evaluate and identify areas for improvement. Principal teachers and other teaching staff should continue to be an integral part of this process.

The review of SMT and guidance remits should continue to ensure clear lines of responsibility and communication in all areas which impact on the pupils' experience.

### **3 CONTINUITY AND PROGRESSION IN LEARNING INCLUDING TRANSITIONS**

The review team agreed with the following statements from the school's S&Q report:

- ✿ The school has improved its curricular links with partner primary schools with a

programme of regular visits from modern languages, physical education, science and English departments. The P7 Induction programme effectively used the focus of enterprise to introduce the pupils to the new school setting.

- ❖ Throughout the S1 and S2 curriculum departments are making effective progress to ensure that courses take account of prior attainment.
- ❖ The curriculum flexibility working group made very good progress to influence the structure of S3 and S5/S6 course choice to maximise pupil choice and progression.
- ❖ There are very effective links with Stevenson and Edinburgh's Telford Colleges.
- ❖ Targets are set for pupils in S3–S6 within subject departments and guidance staff support pupils through a programme of pupil and family interviews to plan for progress.
- ❖ Significant progress has been made in the Assessment is for Learning Programme with staff embracing the 4 phase teaching model.
- ❖ Teachers use an effective range of assessment techniques which informs the reporting process and includes both a progress report and an attainment report for students. A very good aspect of the attainment reports is the teacher's comments on next steps in learning.
- ❖ There is a very highly developed work experience programme which engages with a large number of local employers in preparation interviews with pupils prior to placement.
- ❖ There are very strong links with Careers Scotland which ensures that almost all school leavers go onto to Higher or Further Education, Skillseekers or work.

Overall, the quality of continuity and progression in pupils' learning was good with some examples of very good practice.

### Strengths in continuity and progression in learning including transitions

The school offered a wide range of courses at all levels. The recommendations of a staff working group had led to an extension of the curricular and vocational opportunities available to pupils from S3 to S6 which increased the range of courses available to meet the needs of pupils. A number of departments had introduced new Access 3 and Intermediate courses as alternatives to standard grade, and the introduction of woodworking practical craft skills and lifestyle and consumer studies had proved very popular with pupils. In the S5/S6 curriculum increased flexibility of choice and the introduction of hairdressing and psychology had led to more appropriate coursing and had established strong collaborative working arrangements with local colleges. Pupils in S6 had also benefited from open learning courses in politics, biology and Italian.

The quality of learning and teaching was good or very good in almost all lessons. In most subjects, teachers took care to involve as many pupils as possible in the learning process and to take account of their previous learning. Almost all teachers gave clear explanations and instructions and most were sharing with pupils the knowledge and skills they were expected to learn. In most classes, teachers made some use of differentiated approaches to meet the range of pupils' learning needs and in some there was a clear use of assessment to guide the pupils' next steps in learning.

Arrangements for curricular and vocational guidance were very good. The school had well-established systems in place to support pupils in making their choices from S2 to S3, from S4 to S5 and from S5 to S6. At each stage very good course choice handbooks had been produced by school staff for pupils and parents. Parents' information evenings were held annually to explain the course choice

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options available and the process involved. Clear guidance on curricular choices were given to pupils during their PSE classes and this was followed by individual coursing interviews with their guidance teacher. Full account was taken of pupils' aspirations and career requirements together with their course recommendations from subject departments in helping pupils to decide their choice of courses.

Pupils' performance was recorded on the school's electronic recording system. These records built up a useful profile of individual pupils' aptitudes, progress and attainment. Key staff had had access to all of the information which allowed them to track individual pupils' progress. Most departments had their own customised recording system which had a more specific focus within their own particular curricular area. Pupil targets were set in almost all areas from S4 to S6. These targets were set by departments and were used as the basis of discussion with pupils about next steps in learning. The use of a monitoring week in each year group was particularly effective. This allowed each department to indicate concerns about specific pupils' achievement and attainment. This information was collected and summarised to provide an overview of the pupils' progress. A member of the SMT then addressed the options and support needs of the identified pupils.

The school had very well-established links with both Stevenson and Telford Colleges. The colleges took part in the school career evening and there had been significant involvement through the Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS). The colleges had also supported the school in its proposals to provide more appropriate courses for all pupils and had participated in the mock interview process with S4 pupils prior to work experience placements.

The school had established excellent working relationships with its associated primary schools. The HTs and relevant guidance and SfL staff met regularly to ensure the schools worked cooperatively as a cluster, to plan joint development, and implement agreed arrangements to support the transitions of pupils from the primary to the secondary school.

The pastoral transition arrangements were very good and well managed by the SMTs of both sectors with very good communications between the P7 teachers and the guidance and SfL staff. These arrangements included family interviews to ensure pupils and parents were partners in the process as well as joint events which gave pupils from all the cluster primaries the opportunity to meet and work together.

The secondary school had improved its curricular links with the partner primaries with a very good programme of regular visits from modern languages, PE, science and English departments. There was an excellent P7 induction programme in place which effectively used the focus of enterprise to introduce the pupils to the new school setting.

#### **Areas for development in continuity and progression in learning including transitions**

The school should continue to explore the flexibility afforded by national qualifications to further enhance its curriculum provision to reflect pupils' needs.

The school should continue to develop its improvements in learning and teaching to provide the best learning experiences for all pupils.

The school should address the need for pupils' progress to be assessed against national assessments in English and mathematics at appropriate times in S1 and S2 to ensure appropriate targets are set for all pupils.

The school should extend its tracking system to all years. This should be linked to the meaningful setting, monitoring, and evaluation of realistic targets in all areas and stages across the school.

The curricular liaison at the P7/S1 transition should be further developed to ensure all secondary school departments form a clear understanding of pupils' previous learning. The learning experiences in the S1 courses should be adjusted in terms of content and delivery to take advantage of this knowledge.

## SUMMARY

### Commendable features

- ❖ The school had a very high quality of pastoral care in place for all pupils.
- ❖ Staff were hard working and committed to the needs and aspirations of their pupils.
- ❖ Staff worked effectively in teams, at all levels in the school, to provide a very good level of support for pupils.
- ❖ The school provided excellent opportunities for a wide range of extra curricular activities.
- ❖ There was a strong and supportive curricular and vocational guidance programme in place.
- ❖ SMT had been involved in a number of focused monitoring and evaluation exercises which had involved sharing classroom experience across the school.
- ❖ The school was very well led. The HT provided clear direction, possessed a range of positive personal qualities and was effective in motivating others.
- ❖ The pastoral support for the transition of pupils from P7 to S1 was very good and had culminated in an excellent and innovative induction programme.
- ❖ The school had made significant progress in creating curricular links with its associated primaries.

### Areas for development by the school

- ❖ The SMT and all promoted staff should continue to develop a consistent and systematic approach to monitoring the quality of learning and teaching across all departments. Particular emphasis should be given to the pace of learning for more able pupils.
- ❖ The school should continue to review the remits of promoted staff to ensure all areas of responsibility are clearly assigned and to create greater integration of the coordination and line management of the guidance and SfL team.
- ❖ Whole school target setting and tracking should be extended to all years. Developments should ensure pupils are involved in meaningful target setting and evaluation.
- ❖ The school should continue to develop the curricular liaison with its associated primaries to promote a continuous and progressive learning experience for all pupils through the P7 to S1 transition process. All departments should ensure that their S1 programmes build on pupils' previous knowledge and provide suitable challenge in line with their abilities.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the school's S&Q report is a very good reflection of the current development position.

The school will be supported to prepare an action plan to meet the main recommendations in this report.

Examples of good practice identified in the commendable features will be recorded to enable their wider dissemination across the authority.

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