

Summarised inspection findings

Regius Christian School

Independent

29 January 2019

Key contextual information

Regius Christian School is an independent, co-educational day school, located in the Newcraighall area of Edinburgh. It is registered to provide education to children aged 5 to 14. At the time of the inspection the pupil roll was 30. Children attend from a wide area, including from West Lothian and Fife. Since the last inspection visit in April 2018, there had been significant changes in the leadership, staffing and governance arrangements within the school. In August 2018, a depute headteacher was appointed from within the staff team.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Regius Christian School is a caring and welcoming school with a warm, family ethos. The headteacher has a clear vision, for learners to 'see themselves as God the Father sees them', and to 'dream big dreams'. This is evident in the day-to-day life of the school community, as children develop their confidence, resilience and independence as valued individuals. Recently, the headteacher has led a process to revisit the vision, values and aims of the school. This has included sharing the vision with staff, children and parents, to ensure that the work of the school is clearly understood and relevant to all.
- Since our last visit, the school has taken action to strengthen its governance arrangements. The Board of Directors has appointed new members, who each bring different skills and expertise to the team. This includes in the areas of education, child protection and wellbeing, and finance. Board meetings are now more regular and focused on taking forward a clear, strategic plan for the future success of the school. The headteacher and depute headteacher work closely with the Board, sharing the successes and challenges in an open, transparent way.
- The dedicated and caring headteacher continues to provide wise leadership, guidance and direction for staff, children and parents. She continues to provide an important teaching role for older children. Her passion for the school community and personal resilience has enabled the school to withstand recent challenges and to return to an ethos of stability and calmness. Since taking up her new post, the depute headteacher has demonstrated dynamic and astute leadership, particularly in managing the operational day-to-day life of the school. She is successfully leading a process of change to improve systems for self-evaluation and planning for improvement.
- Having taken appropriate action to resolve previous staffing issues and other challenges, the school's governance and leadership teams are much better placed to take forward their plans for the future development of the school. The school improvement plan has a manageable set

of priorities that accurately reflect the next steps for the school. These have been established following stakeholder consultation. As a result, there is a renewed sense of professional trust and togetherness, which is leading to a shared approach in taking these priorities forward.

- The headteacher and depute headteacher have made a positive start to re-establishing systems and processes for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. They review teachers' plans; talk to children about their work; and make informal observations of lessons. They should continue to develop these processes, whilst taking a focused approach to gathering information. This will help them to pinpoint what is working well and what needs further development. The depute headteacher has made good progress in establishing more formal ways to gather the views of children and parents, for example through questionnaires. Commendably, the outcomes of such consultation exercises are promptly shared with the school community, highlighting where suggested changes to provision and practice will be made.
- The staff team, including those who have recently joined the school, are committed to improvement and very willing to work together to share ideas and expertise. Staff have used *How Good is Our School?* (4th edition) to evaluate together the strengths of the school and to identify areas for improvement. Teaching and support staff feel valued for the contributions they make, and feel that their skills and talents are utilised for the benefit of children. The depute headteacher has been proactive in establishing a range of beneficial partnerships with local schools. This has facilitated meaningful opportunities for teachers to share and learn about good practice, for example in curriculum planning and approaches to assessment. This outward-looking approach to professional learning is beginning to have a positive impact on learners' experiences. There is scope to build on these partnerships further, in order for staff to develop their confidence in making robust assessments of children's progress in learning.
- Children of all ages are articulate and very proud of their school. They demonstrate care, compassion and love for one another. Older children demonstrate important leadership qualities as they arrange activities and generally care for younger ones. As children move through the school, they feel they increasingly have some ownership of their own learning. Children are ready to take an increased role in leading change. Using *How good is OUR school?* (2018) to support enhance learners' participation in self-evaluation would be helpful in taking this forward.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- There is a very positive ethos in the school, which is underpinned clearly by the vision, values and aims. Senior leaders discuss these regularly with children, staff and parents to ensure that all members of the community continue to support them. Children of all ages speak articulately about the school values and the ways in which children and staff show kindness to and respect for one another. They also stress the importance that staff place on meeting children's rights, as well as the importance for children to acknowledge teachers' rights. Children are clear as to what these rights are, having devised an attractive and informative school charter.
- All children are motivated and engage positively in their learning. They are extremely well behaved and interact well in classes. They contribute articulately to all class discussions. Recently, children have devised personal learning targets. These are helping them to understand aspects of their learning more clearly and to have increased focus. As the school develops this practice, there is scope for staff and children to reflect on and discuss these targets more regularly. This will help to ensure that targets are appropriately challenging and link to the breadth of children's individual developing skills. Most children engage in learning which is well matched to their needs. A few higher-achieving children would benefit from learning at a faster pace.
- All teachers and support staff are caring and nurture positive relationships with children. In all lessons, teachers outline the purpose of learning carefully and provide clear explanations. They use questioning well to elicit information and to help children understand their learning more effectively. Children are provided with opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in groups. In most lessons we observed, there was evidence of differentiated activity and/or outcome to meet the different abilities of children.
- There is scope, in a few aspects of the curriculum at times, for teachers to adopt more creative approaches to teaching. This could include using digital technologies more regularly to deepen and stimulate children's learning. Children could be given more opportunities to lead and take greater ownership of their learning. Younger children would benefit from more opportunities to learn and explore through play. Increasingly, staff are using the outdoors and local community as a context for learning. There is scope to extend this further.
- Overall, teachers use summative assessments, including standardised assessments, effectively to determine children's progress in learning. These link to planned classwork that is outlined in the Facilitated Individualised Learning Opportunities. Senior leaders are in the early stages of considering the implementation of a wider range of assessments on an ongoing basis. They should continue with this work, to help children demonstrate and apply their skills and understanding more successfully over time.

- Senior leaders review children’s attainment in literacy and numeracy on a yearly basis. They also record information relating to aspects of children’s learning on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Senior leaders acknowledge that a next step is for teachers to use assessment information more rigorously and regularly. This will help them to determine the next steps in children’s learning more accurately, and to provide more structured and timely interventions as necessary.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Regius School has a nurturing, caring ethos where children feel safe and happy. The calm, positive and purposeful learning environment is founded on mutual respect and kindness. Relationships between adults and children are supportive and positive. As a result, children are developing confidence and resilience. All children feel they have trusted adults with whom they can discuss worries or concerns.
- Across the school, all staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the care and welfare of all children. They understand the importance of promoting the wellbeing of children. Staff feel valued and supported as part of the school. There is a strong sense of teamwork amongst the staff team.
- Health and wellbeing is given appropriate place in the curriculum for all learners. Across the stages, a holistic approach to learning about health and wellbeing, that complements the ethos of faith, is being developed. Staff also have a responsive approach to delivering aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum, based on the needs and suggestions of children. Recently, children have benefited from researching the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They have created a whole school charter for Regius School that reflects their rights within their own school context. Staff should continue to develop children's knowledge and understanding of their own wellbeing through further exploration of the UNCRC and the national wellbeing indicators.
- Children across the school receive a minimum of two hours of PE each week. They respond well to the opportunities to participate in regular physical exercise. This includes as part of PE, during active playtimes and increasingly, on visits to the local park. Children understand the positive impact of regular activity on their physical health. As a result of their recent request to staff, older children benefit from weekly visits to the gym at neighbouring Queen Margaret University. Through their experiences in school plays, musicals and performances, children of all ages experience a sense of achievement and pride in representing their school.
- The headteacher and depute headteacher are aware of their roles and responsibilities related to statutory duties. Since the last inspection visit, the depute headteacher has taken on the role of child protection officer. This has been one of her priorities on taking up post. Policies and procedures for keeping children safe have been updated and shared with the school community. All staff have been trained in child protection and have confidence in the school's approaches. The school has effective procedures in place to identify any additional support children or families may require. The headteacher and depute headteacher monitor children's attendance regularly. The school is proactive in dealing with and monitoring any issues that may arise.

- There are procedures in place to identify and support children with additional support needs. A staged intervention approach is used to consider the needs of children and to identify appropriate interventions. Where appropriate, the school works with partners, including health professionals, to ensure that the needs of children requiring additional support are met. Children who require an individualised plan or protocol have one in place. These are reviewed regularly with children and parents.
- Children, parents and staff alike feel they are treated fairly and with respect. There is an inclusive approach within the school. School leaders have begun to track the wider achievements of all children, to ensure that no child misses out. The school's curriculum provides children with some opportunities to explore aspects of diversity and equality. Moving forward, staff should continue to build on this aspect of their work. This will equip children fully for moving on to secondary school, and for life and the world of work.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- At the junior stages, and at S1 and S2, most children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. A few children are making very good progress in aspects of their learning. Due to the fact that every cohort in this school is fewer than ten, statements about progress have been made which ensure the anonymity of individual children.

Listening & Talking:

- Children are making very good progress in listening and talking. The ethos of the school supports children very well to develop their communication skills. As a result, they participate readily and are keen and willing to share their work with others. They speak confidently and enthusiastically during conversations with their peers and adults. Teachers are beginning to use a new assessment rubric for talking across the school. This will help teachers and children to understand and determine their progress and next steps more accurately.

Reading:

- According to the school's own data, children are making satisfactory progress overall in reading. The youngest children at the junior stages are making good progress in developing knowledge and application of phonics. As children move through the school, they use personal readers enthusiastically to develop their reading skills. Whilst they enjoy this, teachers should continue to develop opportunities for older children to engage in reading in a wider variety of creative contexts. Staff should progress their plans to review the texts that children are reading, to ensure they provide appropriate challenge for all children.

Writing:

- Most children are making good progress in writing. Across the school, children have regular opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. This includes imaginative, personal and functional writing. As most children progress through the school, they create well-considered pieces of writing which demonstrate sound understanding of structure and grammar.
- Most children are benefitting from structured feedback from teachers, which is helping them to develop their skills in writing. There is scope for this practice to be shared more consistently across all classes to support all children effectively. Going forward, we have asked staff to consider adopting a more holistic approach to teaching literacy, ensuring closer links between the skills of reading, writing, listening and talking.

Numeracy & mathematics:

- At the junior stages, and at S1 and S2, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

- At the early stages of the junior years, the concepts of addition and subtraction are taught and consolidated effectively. At the middle stages of the junior school, children are exploring practical mathematics activities of time and rotational symmetry. By P7 and at S1 and S2, children are using mental and written strategies well to complete complex, multi-step problem-solving activities. At S1 and S2, children follow individualised programmes for numeracy and mathematics. Overall, there is a need for the school to provide additional challenge for a few children at the senior stages.

Other curricular areas

- In keeping with the philosophy and ethos of the school, children have a detailed knowledge of scripture and how it is relevant in their day-to-day lives. They apply their knowledge and understanding in daily decision-making and in nurturing relationships with their peers.

Children are making very good progress in the expressive arts. Most children show considerable talent in music performances and art activities. Creativity is at the heart of the school's curriculum. The choral performances, in which all children take part, are outstanding. Art and design at all levels is of a very high standard. Every child's creativity is encouraged and strengthened, for example, by taking part in the school's musicals and shows, either as a performer, or in the technical aspects of theatre production.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders and teachers have a sound understanding of children's current attainment in writing, reading and numeracy. They are not yet able to articulate children's attainment over time. Senior leaders are in the early stages of developing an overview of children's progress as they move through the school. They should continue to develop this system to track and monitor children's progress more robustly. This will help teachers to provide targeted interventions for children in a more structured and timeous manner.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children are given many opportunities to achieve in school. This includes supporting one another to do their best in classes and in the wider school. It also includes them increasingly being given opportunities to lead activities, such as choreographing and leading the technical aspects of school shows and performances. Children are encouraged and supported by staff when they have ideas for fundraising. They feel they are able to take their ideas forward. This is helping them to develop confidence, as well as a range of skills, including communication with others.
- The school places much value on celebrating children's achievements regularly. This takes place during weekly school assemblies; on the school's social media platform; and in whole-school achievement folders. This helps children to know how much their participation and success matters to all staff. It also helps the school to build positive relationships with the wider community. Senior leaders are keen to raise the school's profile more widely in the local area and beyond, continuing to develop experiences for children. They have good ideas for doing this.
- Children also achieve well outside school and share their successes regularly with teachers. A few children lead worship celebrations successfully in their own churches. They speak proudly of their achievements. The school should continue to plan meaningful, real-life opportunities for children to develop and apply skills for learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

- The school ethos is underpinned by senior leaders' shared vision to create an equitable learning environment for all children. Teachers consider carefully the learning and pastoral needs of all children, and show considerable skill in meeting individual, specific needs. There is scope for teachers to provide increased challenge for a few children to meet their needs more effectively. Additionally, the school should continue to develop its practices in relation to assessment and the rigorous monitoring and tracking of progress to continue to meet all children's needs effectively.

Choice of QI : 2.2 Curriculum

- rationale and design
- development of the curriculum
- learning pathways
- skills for learning, life and work

- The school has a clear rationale for its curriculum, underpinned by its Christian vision, values and aims, and based broadly on the principles of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Children of all ages benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum, which takes good account of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. This provides appropriate progression routes for all curricular areas, highlighted through the facilitated, individualised learning opportunity (FILO) folders. Overall, older children speak positively about the subjects they are able to study.
- Across all stages, the school provides children with two hours of quality PE. Children are able to study two modern languages, in addition to English. Currently these are German and French. Religious education (scripture and worship), expressive arts, information and communications technology, social studies and science also feature prominently in the curriculum.
- The school is using the skills and talents of partners increasingly to enhance the curriculum. This includes parents, the Scottish Council for Independent Schools, Queen Margaret University and neighbouring primary schools. Queen Margaret University supports the provision of physical education, allowing the school to use its resources. Neighbouring schools show willingness to share professional learning opportunities with staff, as well as resources more generally. The school is expanding its role in the local community, by becoming more involved in local churches and contributing to Christmas celebrations, such as at Newhailes House. This is leading to children benefitting from varied and new experiences.
- Senior leaders are in the process of reviewing the curriculum on offer. In doing this, they should take increased account of children's views in identifying relevant, up-to-date contexts for learning which interest them. There is also scope for teachers to deepen opportunities for learning at S1 and S2, and to consider Curriculum for Excellence fourth level experiences and outcomes. As senior leaders and teachers develop their curriculum, they need to plan learning, teaching and assessment together. Linking assessments more explicitly to the work that children are undertaking in class will help children, and their parents, to put their learning into context more easily and enrich their experiences. To support staff, a next step would be to consider aligning their assessment approaches to national benchmarks for all areas of the curriculum.
- Parents would welcome further advice in preparation for the child's transition from Regius School on to secondary school. Staff should consider how the curriculum could best support learners and their parents in this area.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.