

# Summarised inspection findings

**St Margaret Mary's Secondary School**

**Glasgow City Council**

**26 May 2026**

## Key contextual information

School Name:	St Margaret Mary's Secondary School
Council:	Glasgow City Council
SEED number:	8438331
Roll (February 2026):	430

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

Exclusions are generally in line with the national average.

In September 2024, 57% of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2024, 80% of pupils lived in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2024, the school reported that 70% of pupils had additional support needs.

St Margaret Mary's Secondary School is a Roman Catholic secondary school, serving the community of Castlemilk in Glasgow City Council. St Margaret Mary's Secondary School shares a campus with St Oswald's Secondary School. The headteacher has been in post since August 2024 and is headteacher of both schools. This inspection relates only to St Margaret Mary's Secondary School. There are two associated primary schools, John Paul II Primary School and St Bartholomew's Primary School. The headteacher is supported by three depute headteachers.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. 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 and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

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

- Gospel Values underpin a positive and nurturing climate for learning across the school. This is evident in the very trusting, positive and mutually respectful relationships between almost all young people and staff. Staff create warm, purposeful, calm learning environments. These enhance young people's learning experiences.
- Most young people demonstrate high levels of engagement and motivation. They are proud of their school and show a strong respect for learning. Young people feel encouraged and motivated by staff's belief in their ability to succeed. These high expectations are underpinned by the school vision of 'only the best will do'. This is supporting young people to be successful learners. Most young people engage very well, show a strong sense of agency and take pride in the progress they are making.
- Teachers make consistent use of the learning and teaching framework. This provides a coherent structure to lessons. Young people benefit from these clear structures and routines. Almost all teachers use effective starter activities to engage young people and revisit prior learning. Young people talk positively about how starter activities support them to engage promptly in their learning. In a few lessons, the time spent on starter activities is too long and this affects the pace of the lesson. In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning. Success criteria are shared in almost all lessons, but the quality of these is variable. In a few lessons, teachers' explanations of how to be successful in learning is overly focused on the task to be completed rather than on the learning contained within the task.
- Almost all teachers have a good knowledge of the needs of individual young people. The majority of teachers use the information provided about young people who require additional support with their learning effectively to meet their needs. Young people are supported well through a variety of strategies and support materials. Teachers also work successfully with support assistants to ensure further support can be provided for young people, where appropriate.
- Young people work well independently and in groups. In a few lessons, young people are provided with opportunities to lead their learning. In a significant minority of lessons, learning is overly teacher-led and there are missed opportunities for young people to lead their own learning. In a few of these lessons, this has a significant impact on the pace and level of challenge, resulting in a few young people becoming disengaged.

- In almost all lessons, explanations and instructions are clear and teachers use questioning very well to check young people's understanding. In a minority of lessons, teachers use high-quality questioning effectively to develop young people's critical thinking skills and deepen their understanding. In a few lessons, young people are challenged well. Teachers should continue to consider how they will introduce greater levels of challenge for a few learners. Senior leaders should continue to identify and share strong practice across the school.
- In all departments, teachers use digital technology very effectively and creatively to support and enhance young people's learning. They use a range of digital platforms to share learning resources and complete activities which consolidate learning. Young people are very positive about the digital approaches and how these support them both within and outwith school. Teachers also use digital platforms well to better meet the needs of learners who require further support or adaptations to lessons to engage in learning. For example, young people who have English as an additional language have access to translated learning materials and in the moment translation of the lesson. This ensures that lessons are accessible for these learners.
- Across the school, staff are making effective use of a range of assessment approaches to identify young people's progress and next steps in learning. Most departments share assessment criteria to exemplify what learning looks like at different levels. This is supporting young people well to understand where they are in their learning and what they need to do to improve. Most faculties are adapting assessments to better meet the needs of young people at different stages of their learning. This is providing stronger evidence of what young people know and can do.
- Most staff use questioning or formative assessment, such as plenaries, during and at the end of a lesson to assess understanding. A minority of staff use this formative information to adapt learning or adjust future planning to meet learners' needs. Sharing this effective practice across the school will help ensure that all young people are appropriately challenged and supported to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Staff benefit from structured opportunities to engage in moderation activity within the school and with colleagues across partner secondary schools across the city. This is helping to ensure that judgements about progress and attainment are reliable and in line with national Benchmarks and Standards. Teachers in a significant minority of subject areas are involved in work with Qualifications Scotland which supports further their understanding of national expectations. These teachers use their experience well to support their colleagues' understanding of national assessment standards.
- There is a growing range of ways in which learners are supported to understand their progress and next steps. Approaches such as learner profiles, written comments, digital voice notes and structured conversations help young people reflect meaningfully on their learning. Almost all young people know the level they are working at and can talk about the progress they are making. A minority of faculties use digital platforms effectively to log feedback. This is having a positive impact on the engagement of young people and their parents with assessment information.
- All departments have well-established approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment. They use national Benchmarks and Standards well to inform planning. This is

ensuring that most young people make appropriate progress. Staff know their young people very well. A majority of teachers use this information effectively to plan adaptations to support and challenge all learners.

- Across the school, there is a considerable range of data available at departmental and class teacher level. All departments have effective arrangements in place for tracking and monitoring the progress of young people in the broad general education (BGE) and senior phase. Almost all departments use this information well to identify where improvements are required. As a result, staff can make informed decisions about where targeted action or intervention is most likely to lead to improved outcomes.

## 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- Following the inspection Glasgow City Council, working with the school, have taken forward areas for improvement in safeguarding which required urgent action. HM Inspectors have reviewed information relating to these areas for improvement. HM Inspectors are satisfied with the response taken by Glasgow City Council and do not require any further information.

## 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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

#### BGE

- In 2024/25, almost all young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level or better in literacy by the end of S3. Most young people achieved CfE third level or better in numeracy by the end of S3 in the same year. Staff have had a strong focus on improving literacy and numeracy attainment in S1-3. The benefit of this can be seen in the improvements in attainment at CfE fourth level in particular, where attainment levels have risen considerably between 2021/22 to 2024/25. Rigorous tracking of data from entry to S1 to the end of the BGE underpins the strong progress young people are making in literacy and numeracy. This includes young people who require additional support with their learning. Both the English and mathematics department have reviewed and modified their S1-3 courses this year to ensure content remains relevant and skills based.

#### Senior phase

##### Leavers

##### Literacy

- A majority of young people who left school achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better in literacy from 2020/21 to 2024/25, in line with the Virtual Comparator (VC). In the same period, young people's attainment improved at SCQF level 6, significantly higher than the VC in 2023/24 and in line in 2024/25.
- A majority of young people with additional support needs who left school between 2020/21 to 2024/25 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. In the same period, the percentage of young people with additional support needs who achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy increased considerably.

##### Numeracy

- A majority of young people who left school achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, between 2020/21, strongly improving in 2024/25, although still in line with the VC. A few young people achieved SCQF level 6, generally in line with the VC from 2020/21 to 2024/25.
- A majority of young people with additional support needs who left school in 2024/25 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, improving from a minority in previous years.

## Cohorts

- The levels of young people's attainment in literacy and numeracy increase as they move through the school. Young people's attainment is improving overall year on year.

## Literacy

- In S4, most young people achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy between 2021/22 and 2024/25, in line with the VC. A majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy between 2021/22 and 2024/25, in line with the VC.
- By S5, based on the S4 roll, a majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy between 2020/21 and 2024/25. This attainment was significantly much higher than the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24. A minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy between 2020/21 and 2024/25 in line with the VC, with the exception of 2022/23 when achievement was significantly higher than the VC.
- By S6, based on the S4 roll, a majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy between 2020/21 and 2024/25. This attainment was significantly much higher than the VC in 2021/22, 2023/24 and 2024/25. A minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy between 2020/21 and 2024/25, in line with the VC between 2020/21 and 2022/23 and improving to significantly higher than the VC in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

## Numeracy

- In S4, there is a clearly improving picture in numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better. The school has improved from a minority of young people achieving at this level, significantly lower than the VC in 2020/21 to 2022/23, to a majority of young people, significantly higher than the VC in 2024/25.
- By S5, as a percentage of the S4 roll, a majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in 2024/25, improving from in line with the VC to significantly much higher than the VC in 2024/25. A few young people achieved SCQF level 6, in line with the VC from 2020/21 to 2023/24, increasing to a minority in 2024/25.
- By S6, based on the S4 roll, a majority of young people generally achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy from 2020/21 to 2024/25. The percentage of young people who achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy has increased overall during this period. A few young people achieved SCQF level 6 during the same period.

## National Qualifications

- In 2024/25, passes at A-C in National 5 (N5) English in S4-6 were in line with the national picture. By S5/6, A-C passes in Higher English were considerably lower than national. In 2024/25 passes at A-C in N5 Applications of Mathematics in S4 were considerably above national. By S5/6, N5 Applications of Mathematics remains a positive story for both number of entries and passes at A-C level. The majority of young people who are presented for N5 Mathematics in S4 are also presented for N5 Applications of Mathematics. Senior leaders should keep under review the number of young people who are presented for both courses so that young people attain as highly as possible in the course that is best suited to both their current learning needs and their future pathways. In 2024/25, the percentage of young people presented for Higher Mathematics and who achieved grades A-C was below the national picture.

## Attainment over time

- Senior and middle leaders, in conjunction with teachers, carry out well-structured and regular analysis of young people's attainment data at key points of the year. This supports the aspirational approach of staff towards providing all young people with every opportunity to attain. The very effective use of data to identify and address attainment gaps is leading to considerable improvements in the level of young people's attainment. This approach supports young people to sustain positive progress as they move through the school.

## BGE

- Most young people achieve CfE third level in S1-3, with a minority achieving CfE fourth level, in all curriculum areas. There are high levels of consistency in teacher professional judgement and this supports a strong transition between the BGE and the senior phase.

## Senior phase

### Leavers

- Based on average complementary tariff scores, the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people who left school between 2020/21 and 2024/25 achieved generally in line with the VC.

### Cohorts

- Based on average complementary tariff scores, there is an improving picture of attainment for the middle attaining 60% of young people in S4 who attained significantly much higher than the VC in three of five years from 2020/21 to 2024/25. The lowest attaining 20% and highest attaining 20% of young people attained in line with the VC over the same period.
- By S5 based on the S4 roll, using average complementary tariff scores, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people was significantly higher than the VC in four of the five years between 2020/21 and 2024/25. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people improved from in line with the VC in 2020/21 to 2023/24 to significantly much higher than the VC in 2024/25. The attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people was generally in line with the VC over the same period.
- By S6 based on the S4 roll, using average complementary tariff scores, the lowest attaining 20% and highest attaining 20% of young people generally attained in line with the VC between 2020/21 and 2024/25. The middle attaining 20% of young people attained significantly higher than the VC in 2021-22, 2023/24 and 2024/25.

## Breadth and depth

- Staff are using data highly effectively to identify young people's needs and to inform appropriate and successful interventions where there are attainment gaps. There is a wide variety of carefully planned, supportive interventions available to young people in the senior phase, through both universal and targeted approaches. The universal interventions include supported study, Saturday school, Easter school and a well-established breakfast club. The Study Café, introduced because of learner feedback, provides a supportive environment for learners to study independently. Targeted interventions include an intensive mentoring programme and ongoing high-quality tailored support for young people to identify and undertake the qualifications which are most appropriate for their career aspirations.

- At S4, an increasing minority of young people attained five or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better between 2020/21 to 2024/25, significantly much higher than the VC in 2024/25. A minority of young people achieved five or more courses at SCQF level 5A or better in 2024/25, significantly higher than the VC in both 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- By S5, a minority of young people attained five or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better between 2020/21 to 2024/25, significantly much higher than the VC in 2022/23 and significantly higher than the VC in 2024/25. A majority of young people achieved one or more courses at SCQF level 5A or better between 2020/21 and 2024/25, broadly significantly much higher than the VC from 2020/21 to 2024/25. A minority of young people achieved three or more courses at SCQF level 5A or better between 2020/21 and 2024/25, significantly higher or much higher than the VC in four of the five years from 2020/21 to 2024/25. A minority of young people attained one or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better, significantly higher, or much higher than the VC between 2020/21 and 2024/25. A minority of young people attained three or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better between 2020/21 to 2024/25, significantly higher than the VC in 2020/21 and 2023/24.
- By S6, a majority of young people generally attained four or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better between 2020/21 to 2024/25, significantly much higher than the VC in 2023/24 and 2024/25. A minority of young people achieved four or more courses at SCQF level 5A or better, significantly higher than the VC in 2023/24 and 2024/25. A minority of young people achieved four or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better from 2020/21 to 2024/25, significantly higher than the VC in 2024/25. A few young people achieved one or more courses at SCQF level 7C or better, in line with the VC between 2020/21 and 2024/25.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievement**

- The school community's approach to achievements and equity is embedded at the heart of all aspects of the school's work. It is integral to the school's success in supporting young people to reach a wide range of positive destinations, building on their skills and supporting their aspirations.
- Most learners achieve very well across a wide range of personal, leadership and community opportunities. They show confidence, responsibility and are extremely proud of their successes. Learners contribute very positively to the life of the school. Staff track participation carefully to ensure that all young people, including those who face barriers, have equitable access to achievements. Most young people benefit from a broad programme of clubs, activities and accredited awards. More than twenty clubs run across the week and help learners develop teamwork, creativity and resilience. Learners gain further skills through programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, John Muir Award, Saltire, Caritas and the Mark Scott Leadership Award. Vocational pathways, including barista training, jewellery making and football and refereeing, help young people develop confidence, communication and practical skills. The school could further develop the coherence of the wider achievement progression pathway through S1–6 to identify any gaps and remove potential barriers so that all learners take part.
- The school has recently achieved a national rights-based award at silver level. Teachers and young people work collaboratively to ensure that their rights-based focus further promotes fairness, inclusion and respect. As an SCQF Bronze School, the pupil ambassadors raise awareness of learner pathways. Young people in the senior phase work with external partners

to produce helpful study resources. These have been recognised by BBC Bitesize. The school is a Cyber Schools First Silver Award holder in recognition of the strong commitment to embedding cyber security and digital safety.

- Young people take on a wide range of leadership roles which strengthen the school community. Digital, wellbeing, science, technology, engineering and maths and sports ambassadors support other learners and further develop positive relationships. The pupil parliament is active and influential, and young people see their views shaping improvement. For example, 'You Said, We Did' displays, Christmas Fayre, S1 disco, BBC Bitesize study skills support, Spring Culture Day and the Coffee Cart. Young people articulate confidently their skills for learning, life and work and link them to their journey through and beyond school.
- Achievements are regularly and well celebrated across the school through various means, for example, through online platforms, parent/carer communication and badges. Annual awards events recognise the full range of young people's successes, and the established merit system rewards effort and participation. Through the recognition and celebration of achievements both within and outwith school, young people feel valued and motivated.

### **Equity for all learners**

- All staff have a strong understanding of the school's context and community. They use this knowledge very well to identify barriers and provide targeted support that helps young people engage fully in their education. Senior and middle leaders track cohorts closely using Glasgow's monitoring toolkit. These cohorts include for example, care experienced learners and those with English as an additional language. This ensures that support is timely, appropriate, responsive to individual need and leads to improved outcomes for young people.
- Each student has a digital device, which ensures they can access the same resources, materials and learning opportunities as their peers.
- Staff work highly effectively with a wide range of partners. This continues to raise aspirations and broaden understanding of future pathways. Strong links with colleges, other schools and universities across Scotland, including Glasgow Colleges, Glasgow Caledonian University, the University of Glasgow and the University of Strathclyde, help young people explore meaningful routes into further and higher education. Programmes such as Focus West, Top Up, REACH and 'St Andrew's University Beyond Glasgow Project' give learners confidence and insight into pathways beyond school.
- Pupil Equity Funding and Attainment Challenge budgets are used to strengthen equity across the school. Additional staffing helps reduce the impact of barriers to learning for identified learners. Staff work creatively to target young people facing attendance challenges to ensure they achieve qualifications. They have developed very effective bespoke pathways for those young people who find it challenging to enter the school building. They provide strong support for families. Partnership with mentors and local youth work centres are central to the school's nurturing approach. This has successfully increased the engagement with education of a minority of young people. As one example, strong and effective links with Castlemilk Youth Complex support young people through interventions, support groups and accredited awards.
- Successful mentoring programmes play an important role in supporting equity. Young people benefit from weekly meetings with trusted adults through MCR Pathways, and additional

guidance through 'Career Ready', as well as internal mentoring from S3 to S6. These programmes help learners build confidence, resilience and a clear sense of direction. Staff use information from mentoring well to ensure that support is consistent and individualised.

- Transitions from P7 into S1 are well planned and inclusive. Staff work closely with associated primaries to share information and data, helping ensure continuity in learning. Enhanced arrangements are in place for learners who require additional support, and these help young people settle confidently into secondary school.
- Positive destinations have remained a significant strength over the last five years. Almost all young people moved into a positive destination between 2020/21 and 2024/25, with many progressing to higher education. This reflects the school's highly effective work with the Developing the Young Workforce coordinator and Skills Development Scotland partners and the strong ongoing focus on ensuring that every learner is well prepared for their next steps.

## Other relevant evidence

- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. Several areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- The shared campus with St Oswald's Secondary School provides opportunities for young people and staff to collaborate. Examples include Sports Leaders, ASN support for targeted students, and professional learning through 'Language and Communication Friendly Establishment' approaches to support learners. Literacy and numeracy support, including bespoke programmes and moderation, strengthen progression.
- Young people receive their entitlement to planned, progressive religious and moral education from S1-S6, and physical education from S1 to S4. Young people do not currently receive their full entitlement to language learning within the BGE. Senior leaders should now consider how young people from S1-3 can receive their full entitlement in line with the national 1 + 2 languages policy.

## 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.