

# Summarised inspection findings

**Dumfries and Galloway Secondary Inclusion Support**

**Dumfries and Galloway Council**

**1 September 2026**

## Key contextual information

Dumfries and Galloway Secondary Inclusion Support (Secondary Inclusion Support) is a local authority service for young people with a range of social, emotional and behavioural needs. It is collocated on a campus with St Teresa's Roman Catholic Primary School, in the market town of Dumfries.

Additional support needs (ASN) coordinators from mainstream schools submit a 'Request for Assistance' when seeking input from Secondary Inclusion Support. Senior leaders in the young person's mainstream school retain overall responsibility for the provision of full-time education and the coordination of additional support. All young people receiving support from Secondary Inclusion Support remain on their mainstream school roll.

Secondary Inclusion Support is led by a Supporting Learners Manager (SLM) who has additional strategic leadership responsibility for another two education provisions. An acting principal teacher assumes the day-to-day and operational organisation for Secondary Inclusion Support. The SLM took up responsibility for Secondary Inclusion Support two years ago. The acting principal teacher took up their post in August 2025.

In 2020, Secondary Inclusion Support began a period of significant transition. The service previously focused on supporting young people to achieve Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications (NQs) in mathematics and English. Since 2024, Secondary Inclusion Support moved towards providing an outreach service to support young people to improve their wellbeing and participation in education. During this period of transition, teacher staffing levels have reduced due to the service redesign. At the time of the inspection, two teachers remained in post to deliver curriculum activities to young people who attend Secondary Inclusion Support. Following the inspection, Secondary Inclusion Support will reduce its teaching capacity further to one teacher. From August 2026 onwards, the intention of the local authority is that Secondary Inclusion Support will only offer outreach support.

At the time of the inspection, 37 young people accessed support from the service. Thirty-two of these young people access outdoor learning programmes for up to two hours per week. The remainder of their learning programme is the responsibility of their mainstream school. The remaining five young people are taught by teachers from Secondary Inclusion Support for less than half of their school week. A few of the 37 young people receive no other teaching input from their mainstream school.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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

- In 2024, the SLM worked with young people, staff, parents and partners to redevelop the service's vision, values and aims (VVAs). At this time, the VVAs correctly identified the aspiration for staff to improve outcomes for young people through innovative curriculum design and high-quality learning experiences. This helped young people, staff and parents refocus the nature of support that they intended to offer young people. Senior leaders and staff used the VVA to underpin their practice, leading to reestablishing mainstream placements for a few young people.
- During the current academic session, senior leaders and staff have not been able to meet fully the ambition of the VVAs. This has been as a result of the reduction in staffing levels and the unclear purpose of service delivery, including the need to establish clear expectations of mainstream schools. As a result, young people's outcomes have been adversely affected. Too many young people have very limited access to a suitable learning or education programme. Senior leaders now need to work with mainstream schools and local authority officers to revisit the purpose of Secondary Inclusion Support. In doing so, there is a need to reconsider the VVA and whether young people's needs are being met appropriately. This should include ensuring that senior leaders adhere fully to the expectations within the local authority staged intervention processes underpinned by children's rights.
- Senior leaders are fully aware of current barriers that limit service improvement and the changes needed to realise these. They understand the challenges faced in redeveloping a service within a climate of strategic transition for ASN services across the local authority. To support them manage change, senior leaders have developed an appropriate improvement plan outlining key priorities. Their improvement plan prioritises correctly improving learning, teaching and assessment, the curriculum and ensuring the rights of young people are upheld. Senior leaders should ensure that these intended changes result in improved outcomes for young people. They should include clear measures to monitor impact and the quality of improvements.
- Senior leaders have developed an informative personal pathways brochure that outlines the proposed range of supports that Secondary Inclusion Support will offer young people and schools. Senior leaders should continue to use the planned supports to be offered by Secondary Inclusion Support to inform the professional learning required for staff. They should continue with their plans to develop professional learning for mainstream schools as part of their service offer. This will help senior leaders and staff develop their capacity to meet the needs of young people in line with potential service expectations.

- Senior leaders are working increasingly well to provide appropriate support to staff. They ensure that all staff engage with professional discussions aimed at improving educational experiences of young people. As a result, senior leaders and staff are beginning to identify accurately professional learning opportunities to help improve the quality of young people's learning activities. Senior leaders have begun to support teachers to undertake annual professional review and development. In doing so, senior leaders are at the earliest stages of improving expected standards of service delivery and interventions provided to young people.
- Senior leaders have begun to observe young people's learning experiences during Secondary Inclusion Support activities. They provide feedback to staff and use this as a means to focus discussions on the quality of learning and teaching. Senior leaders should continue to refine this approach so that discussions focus more clearly on the impact of activities on learners and the skills that they aim to develop.
- Senior leaders have begun to undertake self-evaluation and quality assure the work of Secondary Inclusion Support using a systematic approach. They are beginning to understand better the areas of additional support where young people engage best when working with staff. They should now increase staff participation in accurately evaluating the impact of the work of Secondary Inclusion Support. This will help staff have a clear understanding of the rationale for change and how they can build upon successes. Senior leaders should develop further staff's understanding of purposeful interventions that impact positively on young people skills. Such as, where young people develop purposefully the skills of regulation, resilience and cooperation.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

- Following changes made to the delivery model of Secondary Inclusion Support, senior leaders are at an early stage of developing new approaches to the delivery of educational programmes. They have not yet established approaches which improve the quality of learning and teaching for young people. Senior leaders identify correctly that they now need to improve young people's personalised learning experiences. They are starting to work with staff to clarify the purpose of learning activities and how these link to individual outcomes and targets. Senior leaders and staff should now ensure that young people's learning offers appropriate pace, challenge, relevance and support to secure better progress.
- Staff are sensitive to the social, emotional, and learning needs of each young person accessing support. Staff access local authority training on deescalation and physical intervention. They develop awareness and knowledge of how to understand young people's trauma. Almost all young people have deescalation plans and appropriate risk assessments in place, where required. Most young people who access support from the Secondary Inclusion Support respond positively to staff and present with positive behaviours. As a result, there has been a reduction in violent incidents and no recorded incidents of bullying over the past session. However, there are occasions when young people present as distressed, anxious or with seriously disruptive behaviours. Staff work well to help most young people regulate and return to learning.
- When teaching in classes, staff use brain breaks and sensory activities well to help young people maximise their focus when learning. This helps young people to engage positively and sustain interest in learning for appropriate periods of time. Staff present learning using a carousel style approach for the young people attending classes. They provide these young people with choices in what learning they would like to engage with. Overall, almost all learning and teaching is overly adult led with all young people in class working individually with a member of staff. Senior leaders and staff need to develop opportunities for young people to learn with reduced adult support and collaborate with peers where possible. Senior leaders should work with staff to continue to develop more creative approaches to learning and teaching.
- A few staff use digital technology to support learning well. Staff should develop further the use of digital tools to increase young people's interactions with learning, motivation and interest. Senior leaders should now work with teachers to increase the use of digital technology across

the range of learning activities provided including using digital tools to enable young people to research information or interact digitally with texts.

- Staff provide interesting outdoor activities for young people as part of their outreach support programme. During these programmes, young people focus on enjoying the outdoors through activities such as, kayaking and den building. Most young people engage positively with these activities. However, most young people are offered outdoor activities for time limited periods. Thereafter, they conclude their outdoor experiences. Staff should now ensure outdoor activities are progressive and focused on the needs of individual young people better. Senior leaders and staff should ensure that outdoor activities provide more explicit focus on skills identified within ASN assessments. This will help staff support young people to target identified ASN, such as, developing regulation, resilience, and cooperation skills.
- For young people accessing learning at the Secondary Inclusion Support school building, senior leaders and staff are beginning to work effectively with partners. This work is supporting the development of useful alternative learning experiences for young people. For example, young people now have opportunities to experience new activities such as horse riding. The majority of young people find these new experiences motivating and enjoyable. However, it is too early to evidence the overall impact of these experiences on improving outcomes for young people.
- Staff work well with a few young people to help them understand the purpose of their learning. In a minority of lessons, staff offer clear explanations and instructions which supports young people to understand how to complete tasks. In all lessons, staff now need to help young people to understand better their learning and the progress they make. Staff need to support young people to build confidence to be curious and develop their higher-order thinking skills.
- Overall, staff use standardised assessments appropriately to measure young people's progress and to inform next steps in learning. A few staff provide useful written and verbal feedback which helps young people to identify next steps. A few staff are beginning to use a range of assessment approaches better to help young people assess their own learning. In a few lessons, staff use questions well to check knowledge and understanding. Across all lessons, staff now need to improve how they use questions to assess understanding. All staff need to continue to develop and use a greater range of high-quality assessment approaches to inform next steps in learning. Teachers would benefit from opportunities to work with colleagues in mainstream schools to moderate the assessment of learning. This will help them to have a shared understanding of national standards and make accurate judgements of when young people have achieved a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level.
- Senior leaders have begun to quality assure staff's planning more regularly. They have identified correctly that there is a need to improve the consistency of planning. A minority of staff plan appropriately across short, medium and long-term timescales for a few areas of the curriculum. Their planning provides the intended learning outcome and activities for young people. It supports them to consider appropriate activities for young people to engage with. A minority of staff involve young people in planning learning and in choosing how to approach learning. Senior leaders now need to continue to work with all staff to ensure appropriate planning is undertaken across Secondary Inclusion Support.
- A few staff are beginning to improve how well they track young people's learning. They are improving how they track young people's progress in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

This is helping a few staff to begin to develop relevant individualised targets for young people. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to improve the overall quality of individualised education programmes and incorporate personalised skills-based targets. In doing so, senior leaders should work with staff to articulate better what the measurable outcomes of success are for young people.

- Senior leaders are beginning to collate information on young people's progress and support staff to plan next steps in learning. They now need to support staff to track young people's progress better and link this to next steps in learning. In doing so, staff should develop an overview of young people's progress and connect this to individual learning targets, curriculum levels and skills development.
- Senior leaders are beginning to improve how they use evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions provided for young people. However, the available information gathered by senior leaders and staff is overly reliant on anecdotal evidence. Senior leaders should continue with plans to strengthen evidence gathering that can be used to support future planning, tracking and monitoring for all young people.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Senior leaders and staff at Secondary Inclusion Support are beginning to develop approaches to flexible learning pathways based on the needs of the young people. They are at the earliest stages of providing essential skills-based learning pathways for young people that take better account of their individual ASN. As a result, a minority of young people are increasingly confident in joining clubs, independently leaving their home and interacting within the wider community. Senior leaders and staff should continue to embed these essential skills-based learning pathways fully so young people build upon prior learning and access appropriate skills progression.
- Senior leaders are beginning to develop closer partnerships outwith Secondary Inclusion Support to provide alternative learning pathways. Such as, they are developing useful partnerships with local sports providers and third sector outdoor learning providers, focusing on relational and trauma informed approaches. Partner's programmes include using water sports or learning mechanical skills to develop confidence and cooperative skills. It is too early for senior leaders to evidence fully the impact these partnerships have on young people's outcomes.
- Secondary Inclusion Support offers support for part of young people's school week. Mainstream schools remain responsible for the full provision of young people's curriculum. A lack of planned and coordinated support between mainstream schools and Secondary Inclusion Support is limiting almost all young people's capacity to build skills and gain knowledge across the curriculum. The local authority should now support senior leaders to work in closer partnership with mainstream schools. In doing so, they should ensure that young people access an appropriate curriculum which helps them achieve success. Senior leaders need to work with staff, families and partners to develop a more extended range of learning pathways so young people develop skills for learning, work and life and secure sustainable positive destinations.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents receive useful information provided by Secondary Inclusion Support staff through the electronic diary system. Parents appreciate that information shared focuses on positive experiences and learning. They use this information to talk to their child about what they have enjoyed at school and what they have been learning about. A few parents note that the work being undertaken by staff is improving their relationships and communication at home. Overall, parents report that staff have provided effective support for their child to leave their home to engage in learning activities. Young people are increasingly developing the confidence required to try new activities, such as, clubs and sporting activities.

## 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, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

weak

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people'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

- Overall, young people require more comprehensive support to improve their wellbeing and achieve fully the success that they are capable of. Young people need to receive more support to understand accurately their wellbeing and how they can improve it including what it is to be safe and healthy at home, school or in the community. Additionally, staff should support young people better to be included within school. Senior leaders and mainstream schools, supported by the local authority, should review the wellbeing and support needs of young people and ensure they are able to meet these needs. This should include ensuring young people receive the highest quality coordinated support possible to improve educational outcomes and their overall wellbeing and inclusion in school.
- The majority of young people supported by Secondary Inclusion Support present with safe behaviours and show respect towards Secondary Inclusion Support staff. This has helped them increase their engagement with education-based activities, including outdoor sports. A few young people have successfully reengaged with education programmes within their mainstream secondary schools. Parents of young people feel that Secondary Inclusion Support has been effective in helping their child to feel positive about themselves. They appreciate that staff have been able to help their child engage successfully in learning for small parts of the school week.
- Senior leaders recently introduced a skills builder framework for young people to record and demonstrate their skills. Staff are beginning to consider the progress a minority of young people make in developing skills of communication, problem solving, self-management and collaboration. This has had a positive impact on these young people. They are better able to articulate the success they have experienced as a result of the support received from Secondary Inclusion Support. It is too early to determine fully the sustained improvements young people make with their wellbeing. However, a minority of young people demonstrate that they are beginning to improve their skills for learning, life and work. For example, young people have completed application forms as they seek employment or training in preparation for leaving school. Senior leaders should now increase the number of young people who are able to record and demonstrate their skills.
- Young people value building life skills through participating in outdoor learning programmes. The minority of young people accessing outdoor activities have developed well their confidence to approach and overcome challenges. They are using their problem-solving skills to build structures or interact within less predictable community settings. Senior leaders should

continue to help staff consider ways to support more young people to develop their confidence. However, for young people accessing class-based support from Secondary Inclusion Support teachers, outdoor activities have stopped. Young people accessing class-based support would benefit from having planned outdoor activities reintroduced. This should focus on these young people improving their regulation, resilience, cooperation and problem solving in less predictable environments. They should be supported to understand how these skills transfer into learning, life, and work.

- A minority of young people have regular education planning meetings in line with national guidance. Most young people require more regular education planning meetings to improve the coordination of support they receive. Young people being supported by Secondary Inclusion Support consistently do not have their entitlements to education met, impacting their capacity to achieve, attain and be included. Senior leaders and mainstream schools, supported by the local authority, should ensure that all young people have their full entitlement to education met as a matter of urgency.
- Almost all young people who may require a coordinated support plan (CSP) are considered for one. However, senior leaders need to ensure that all care experienced young people who meet the criteria for a CSP are always considered. This will help ensure that these young people receive the necessary and coordinated support from agencies.
- A majority of young people increase their engagement and inclusion in educational programmes when supported by Secondary Inclusion Support. This has a positive impact on their experience of inclusion and supports them to understand their needs should not be a barrier to participation and potential to succeed. A few young people have developed the skills required to engage and succeed in their mainstream school settings.
- A majority of young people have experienced reduced access to help from Secondary Inclusion Support over recent years. This is as a result of reduced staffing resource and young people opting out of potential activities offered more often. Too often the majority of young people supported by Secondary Inclusion Support have no or very little other quality education provision available to them. These young people face inequality as a result of their ASN. Senior leaders, supported by mainstream schools and the local authority, should ensure that young people's inclusion and access to comprehensive learning opportunities is not impacted by service redesign.

### 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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

- A very small number of young people across stages S2-S4 are educated by Secondary Inclusion Support staff. Young people working at the broad general education (BGE) phase are taught by staff for up to two days per week within the Secondary Inclusion Support base in Dumfries. Young people working at the senior phase are taught between 90 minutes and four hours per week. Teaching for those young people takes place at an agreed location away from their mainstream schools. Young people at the senior phase have a focus on the achievement of National Qualifications (NQs) at National 3 and National 4 in English and mathematics. All young people are presented for qualifications by their mainstream school.
- Senior leaders were unable to provide robust data on young people's progress in literacy and numeracy. Overall, there is a need for senior leaders and mainstream schools, supported by the local authority, to ensure that attainment and achievement is improving for young people accessing Secondary Inclusion Support. They should develop further effective interventions and strategies to support young people to maximise the benefits of education.
- The majority of young people make satisfactory progress in literacy and English. A minority of young people make satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Almost all young people could make better progress across literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. A few young people make very limited progress in both curriculum areas. Senior leaders and mainstream schools, supported by the local authority, should ensure that all young people access appropriate teaching and learning to make better progress in literacy and English and numeracy and Mathematics.
- In the BGE, young people are taught communication skills through aspects of play. The majority of young people respond well to literal questions about what they are learning, for example about birds and road safety. In the senior phase young people are gaining awards at National 3 and National 4. However, they are capable of achieving more with the correct support.

#### Attendance

- Attendance data was provided by senior leaders only for the current academic year. Almost all requests for assistance made to Secondary Inclusion Support for young people is as a result of low levels of attendance or high exclusion rates from mainstream school. Overall attendance percentages provided do not account for periods of the school week outwith Secondary Inclusion Support learning sessions. Young people's attendance at mainstream schools is low with a few young people not attending their mainstream school at all.

- Staff work closely with young people and their families to encourage positive patterns of attendance at Secondary Inclusion Support learning sessions. Staff have developed a few useful strategies that improve or sustain positive patterns of attendance for a minority of young people. For example, staff make changes to the location where learning is provided or undertake home visits. As a result, a minority of young people's attendance at Secondary Inclusion Support programmes is positive. However, the majority of young people's attendance is too low. For young people who continue to have low levels of attendance, senior leaders and mainstream schools should review and adapt approaches to increase young people's attendance.

### **Attainment over time**

- The Secondary Inclusion Support does not deliver or track all areas of the curriculum. This responsibility remains with mainstream schools. However, senior leaders were unable to provide robust data for young people's progress over time in the areas that Secondary Inclusion Support are responsible for. Senior leaders are at the earliest stages of gathering and analysing data. They should continue to develop data gathering approaches, alongside mainstream schools, to embed approaches that will provide robust evidence of attainment over time.
- In the senior phase, SQA NQ data from 2022/2023, 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 shows that young people in S4 achieved a limited range of NQs beyond English and mathematics. A few young people in previous years achieved a few additional qualifications including Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 mental health and wellbeing, National 4 history and National 3 art and design. Senior leaders and mainstream schools now need to ensure that young people have sufficient opportunity in their senior phase to attain a much wider range of qualifications.

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

- Senior leaders are beginning to track accurately information on young people's post school destinations. In session 2024/2025, a majority of young people moved onto positive destinations on leaving school including college, employment and volunteering placements. A few young people have successfully transitioned back to full-time mainstream school after accessing input from Secondary Inclusion Support.
- Most young people who access outdoor education programmes are successful in developing outdoor skills. They have learned to kayak, fish and utilise bushcraft skills. Young people have developed well their communication and social skills, self-esteem, confidence and problem-solving skills as a result of participating in the outdoor education programmes. Positively, a few young people have volunteered with the outdoor team since leaving school.
- A few young people have recently visited local charity shops and have developed further their understanding of a range of ways to recycle in partnerships with local partners. A minority of young people engage positively with Active School's weekly taster sessions. They are developing awareness of sports that they may enjoy including curling, football and boccia. A few young people are now playing football as part of a local team or as an after-school activity. Previously, senior leaders worked well with a wider range of partners to help provide experiences for young people including activities provided by Youthwork Dumfries and Galloway. Senior leaders should work to build more community partnerships to offer young people increased opportunities to achieve.

- Young people do not currently achieve accredited awards that recognise their personal achievements. As planned, senior leaders and staff should work alongside mainstream schools to identify a range of ways to recognise and accredit young people's personal achievements.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Senior leaders and staff help families to attend appointments and support them to communicate their needs to other professionals, where appropriate. Most staff have an understanding of the ASN and socio-economic background of young people and their families. Their knowledge has influenced the prioritisation of relationship-based work with young people. This is helping almost all families and young people trust and engage with senior leaders within Secondary Inclusion Support. Staff travel to young people's homes to help build relationships. This is beginning to have an impact as most young people are leaving their house to engage in educational programmes. However, senior leaders and staff now need to demonstrate fully how well the relationship-based approach leads to equity of success for all young people. Senior leaders should measure the impact of this approach on young people's attainment and achievements more closely.
- Secondary Inclusion Support does not receive an allocation of Pupil Equity Funding.

## Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE 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.

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.