

Summarised inspection findings

Kirkcaldy High School

Fife Council

17 February 2026

Key contextual information

Kirkcaldy High school is a non-denominational school within Fife Council. The school serves the community of Kirkcaldy in Fife, with a current school roll of 1450.

The headteacher has been in post for three years and is supported by five depute headteachers (DHTs). The school includes a specialist provision with 46 young people on the roll from across the community.

Exclusions are in line with the national average.

Attendance is in line with the national average .

Twenty-four percent of young people live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile 9. Almost all other young people reside in deciles 1- 6.

In 2023/24, 60% of young people are recorded by the school as having an additional support need.

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

- The headteacher leads the school well and has established a strong culture of collaboration across the school community since coming into post in 2022. Clear systems and processes create an inclusive and safe learning environment. He shares a clear vision for the school's future success with staff and young people. Working closely with his leadership team and the wider community, he promotes positive behaviour, attitudes to learning and achievement for all.
- Senior leaders worked with young people, parents, and other stakeholders to develop a shared vision, values, and aims based on a strong understanding of the school's context and community. The values of respect and community are embedded in daily practice and demonstrated by most staff and most young people. Leaders should continue to ensure that the value of ambition has a clearer focus across all daily interactions and practice.
- Staff collaborated well to create the school improvement plan (SIP), which clearly outlines priorities for driving improvement. Priorities for the current session include ensuring a rights-based approach to support young people, improving attainment and increasing the engagement, participation and leadership of all young people. These priorities were shaped by robust self-evaluation across all departments and faculties by staff and senior leaders, who are guided by national and local priorities. Almost all departmental improvement plans align well with the SIP, and senior and middle leaders monitor progress regularly. Improving teaching and learning remains a key focus. Staff agreed on a learning standard that almost all young people understand. This is leading to greater consistency in classroom practice. Moving forward, departmental planning should have a sharper focus on improving attainment for all young people.
- Senior leaders produce an annual Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) plan to target spending aimed at closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The plan details personnel, resources and initiatives to support young people and families. These supports are leading to improved attendance and outcomes for the most disadvantaged young people. Senior leaders should strengthen consultation with all stakeholders to ensure plans reflect a wider range of views.
- Senior leaders promote leadership opportunities across the school, developing an empowered and involved community. The senior leadership team hold clear remits and work with

departments to support improvement. Depute headteachers meet faculty staff regularly to discuss learning, teaching, wellbeing, additional support needs, and attainment. They should work more closely with departments to provide further support with planning and offer more robust challenge in relation to attainment.

- Middle leaders play a strong and central role in driving change. They have engaged in workshops and professional learning to strengthen leadership and improvement strategies. The school has invested significant time and resources to support this work. It is beginning to have an impact on the quality and consistency of approaches within classrooms across the school. Middle leaders now implement more robust self-evaluation, observe lessons regularly, and lead validated self-evaluation (VSE) activities. They report feeling empowered and valued as professionals with a clear agenda for improvement. They should continue to develop the use of data to identify areas for improvement and provide appropriate challenge to raise attainment.
- All class teachers contribute to improvement through Professional Learning Communities. They are involved in improvement planning and develop departmental plans collaboratively. As a result, they feel involved in moving their departments forward. These groups are influencing positively the school's key priorities in driving change and improvement. Teachers should consider ways to further develop leadership skills, for example, by focusing on specific areas of practice or research and implementing strategies to improve attainment.
- Almost all young people are polite, respectful and confident when expressing their views. They develop leadership skills through a range of activities and initiatives, such as S3 ambassadors who helped develop the school's lesson standard and support peers in classes in the broad general education (BGE). Pupils in S1, S3, and S6 act as house captains, organise events and promote positive behaviour. Across year groups, young people participate in groups such as equalities, children's rights, and mental health support. These opportunities help young people build teamwork, communication, and confidence. Leaders should expand leadership opportunities further so that all learners feel involved in school improvement, develop a wider range of skills for learning, life, and work and strengthen their sense of belonging. This will encourage all young people to recognise their role as change agents who contribute regularly to school improvement.
- Senior leaders and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) staff updated the School Partnership Agreement (SPA) actions to be met by 2026 include prioritising and sharing data to target pupils at risk of a negative destination and embedding skills and Career Education Standards across the curriculum. School leaders and house teams are well underway with this work. Their knowledge of young people and their future aspirations form an important part of course choice and check-in discussions with young people.
- Senior leaders have a clear vision for developing the curriculum in line with Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) priorities. They are developing a strategic approach to embed these priorities into curriculum design, but this is at an early stage. The school improvement plan and departmental plans reference employability skills. Staff understanding of wider skills

development across subject areas is also at an early stage, resulting in an inconsistent approach to supporting young people to make informed career choices.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- The school values underpin approaches to teaching and learning. Staff and young people successfully reference these values to drive improvements in the school's ethos. As a result, relationships are very positive and a calm learning environment exists across the school. In almost all classes, young people behave responsibly and arrive ready to learn. In a few classes, a few young people become disengaged. In almost all cases of dysregulated behaviour, staff respond sensitively and calmly to reinforce expectations and support re-engagement.
- Most young people are motivated to learn and maintain focus during the majority of lessons. Young people engage well in group and paired activities. Their engagement is better when they take responsibility for leading aspects of their learning, such as presentations or collaborative roles. Their levels of engagement can be variable in a few lessons which are overly teacher led.
- Almost all staff use an effective online tool (One Stop Shop) to access strategies that reduce barriers to learning. In the majority of lessons, strategies successfully support young people in their learning. As a result, the needs of the majority of young people are being met well by staff. In a majority of classes, staff differentiate learning appropriately by adapting resources, amending assessment approaches, or engineering peer support. Staff receive helpful advice on prior learning during transition from primary school.
- In a majority of lessons, the pace of learning matches young people's ability levels, and tasks are appropriately challenging. In a significant minority of classes, both pace and challenge are insufficiently demanding. Starter tasks are sometimes too lengthy. All staff should ensure that tasks and activities are appropriately aligned to young people's ability levels.
- Staff and young people recently reviewed the Kirkcaldy High School Learning Standard, which aims to support consistency in lesson planning. Almost all teachers provide well-structured lessons and, in most classes, include clear purposes, success criteria, and plenaries. There remains a need to further improve consistency in approaches across all classes and in the delivery of high-quality learning and teaching. Teachers should now further extend approaches to ensuring that all young people actively engage in understanding their learning throughout lessons.

- In most lessons, explanations and instructions are clear. Questioning is used to support learning, and in a few classes, this stimulates interest and is linked to real-life contexts. Teachers should increase their consistency in the use of appropriately challenging questioning during lessons to support young people to develop their higher order thinking skills. Sharing effective practice where this is a regular feature of lessons would support this development. All young people have recently been issued with digital devices. Teachers are increasingly using digital contexts to support learning, including remote access. While the full impact is not yet evident, some teachers already create highly engaging digital learning experiences. Leaders should apply a strategic approach to extend imaginative digital learning.
- Across the curriculum, most teachers use a range of assessment approaches to monitor the progress of young people. The school's policy illustrates effective formative assessment. Most teachers check understanding through questioning and dialogue. In a minority of classes, young people engage in peer- and self-evaluation. Teachers should refer more regularly to success criteria during lessons.
- In the broad general education (BGE), teachers are increasingly confident in using national Benchmarks, which supports accurate assessment. Staff should ensure a deeper understanding of benchmarks to plan consistently challenging programmes. Teachers have recently reviewed S1 programmes more closely to what is required within the BGE, including a greater focus on skills development. Moderation activities within the school and with other locality schools are supporting teachers to make more accurate assessment decisions. Leaders should continue this work to strengthen planning based on national standards. In the senior phase, assessment activities are aligned well to National Qualification standards. A next step is to ensure greater consistency in planning assessments that support higher attainment.
- In the BGE and senior phase, young people receive helpful feedback from teachers that supports their understanding of their progress in learning. The 'Wow, Now, How' approach has led to more learner conversations about progress. A teacher-led PLC provides advice on effective feedback. In a minority of faculties, high-quality feedback is provided digitally. Staff should ensure all young people are aware of next steps to accelerate progress.
- All teachers deliver lessons which are aligned appropriately with the BGE and senior phase. courses and programmes. Planning learning is not yet consistent across and within department. Increased levels of moderation will support further improvements in this area of work. Staff should work collaboratively to involve young people more robustly in the planning of learning and improve their approaches to creative and innovative practice.
- Robust arrangements are in place to track and monitor progress. In the BGE, subject-specific trackers support dialogue with learners through ongoing learning conversations. This supports their understanding of next steps to improve their work. In the senior phase, a more established tracker provides an overview of progress. The Raising Attainment Policy includes helpful indicators for using emerging data. Senior leaders should now clarify expectations for using data more fully to plan learning and interventions that increase attainment and ambition.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The school's shared vision, Dream Big, Work Hard, Be Kind, is central to its work.
- Young people in the BGE experience learning across all four contexts. In S1 and S2, they follow a common curriculum across all subject areas. Recent enhancements, such as project-based learning, add depth to their experience and help them develop and record skills. Curriculum planning at this stage mainly focuses on third and fourth level experiences and outcomes (Es and Os). Senior leaders should continue to evaluate S1 and S2 courses to ensure the focus remains on BGE across all subject areas.
- The school is at an early stage of fully implementing a skills framework across learning. In S1 and S2, young people benefit from enrichment activities designed to reinforce learning and develop skills. Strategic evaluation by senior and middle leaders of these activities would help measure impact and support improvements in attainment.
- Modern Languages continue in S1 and S2 in line with national 1+2 languages guidance, with French and Spanish taught. However, young people do not receive their full entitlement to modern languages throughout the BGE.
- Towards the end of S2, young people make choices for specialisation in S3, leading to qualifications in S4. Pathways remain open for learners who wish to change subjects when moving to S4. Senior leaders should continue to ensure these learners are supported to address gaps in knowledge and skills, enabling full access to learning opportunities.
- In S3, young people experience breadth across curricular areas and personalise their learning through five course choices alongside English, mathematics, physical education (PE), personal and social education (PSE) and religious and moral education (RME). Elective courses include wider accredited opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award, Young Science, Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) Leaders, and the Future Asset Investment Challenge. Senior leaders should consider widening the S2 curriculum offer to provide broader progression pathways into the senior phase.
- My World of Work (MyWOW) is used in the BGE to record attainment, achievements, personal qualities and future plans. Senior phase learners should also use this platform to maintain a skills profile, track development and plan progression.
- Literacy and numeracy as the responsibility of all are not yet fully embedded across the curriculum. New policies are supporting staff to develop approaches, and enrichment periods have been introduced in S1 to improve outcomes. It is too early to see the full impact of this new work. The school should now evaluate the impact of these initiatives.
- Senior leaders work with the local authority, college and employers to support progression and raise awareness of employment opportunities through programmes such as Success Through Education to Personal Strength (STEPS), Community Trade Hub and First Chances. Careers events, guest speakers and industry visits also support learners.

- In S4, young people study up to seven courses leading to National Qualifications, including English and mathematics. Most courses are at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or 5, with some at level 3. Opportunities include National Progression Awards, (NPAs) and college courses as alternatives to National 4 or 5. Currently, a few young people in S4 attend Fife College for vocational options.
- In S5 and S6, learners can study up to five courses. Most young people in S5 take five subjects, while S6 offers flexible pathways, including leadership opportunities and study blocks for Advanced Highers. A few learners are following one of two Foundation Apprenticeships, and a few attend Fife College for vocational options. All staff should ensure the curriculum offer is sufficiently ambitious and aspirational to maximise attainment and improve the life chances of all young people.
- In S4, young people achieve appropriate unit awards in RME. However, most learners in S5 and S6 do not currently experience RME in line with statutory guidance. All learners in S1–S4 receive their full entitlement to PE.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents appreciate the ways in which the school communicates with them and report that this has improved in quality in recent years. They report that they feel more involved in the life of the school since their views are sought regularly through surveys. This included being asked their opinion about the school's vision, values and aims as they were being developed.
- Almost all parents have a positive relationship with the headteacher who is available to speak to them about any concerns they may have in relation to their child. Parents also report that they are more able to communicate with staff who support their child.
- Parents feel that the teaching and learning have improved in recent times and that young people seem more engaged and settled in school.
- The Parent Council are active and support the work of the school. They are consulted on the school improvement plan and discuss its contents with the headteacher. The Parent Council have a positive relationship with the school. Moving forward, the Chair of the Parent Council would like to develop further their relationship with school staff and young people as part of their work to support improvement and change. The Parent Council would like to increase their numbers and should consider involving young people to promote and support what they do.

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

good

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

- The school's welcoming and caring ethos is evident in the positive relationships between staff and young people. The updated school values of community and respect feature in almost all interactions. Almost all young people are proud of their school and feel a strong sense of belonging to the Kirkcaldy High School community. Almost all young people feel safe, included, and respected, and they value the range of spaces and clubs available. Almost all report having at least one trusted adult they can approach with any worries or concerns.
- Wellbeing lies at the heart of the school's support for learners. Most young people are familiar with the wellbeing indicators and regularly use wellbeing webs, surveys, and workshops to assess and reflect on their own wellbeing. Guidance staff and senior leaders use this information effectively to implement targeted interventions, including planned workshops and signposting to appropriate supports and clubs. Young people understand how positive wellbeing supports their readiness to learn.
- Almost all young people receive their entitlement to universal support. House teams, who liaise closely with depute headteachers, guidance teachers, supported learning staff, and support staff, work together effectively to deliver a coherent and responsive staged support structure. Support for learning staff provide teachers with detailed overviews of young people's needs and recommend strategies through the 'One Stop Shop' database. The majority of staff use this information effectively to meet learners' needs in their classes. This ensures that the needs of all young people are well understood and any interventions required to support them are swiftly actioned. Support for learning staff should continue to evaluate how well these strategies are applied to support progress.
- Guidance and support staff know young people very well and respond to issues sensitively and promptly. House teams are highly accessible, offering pastoral and curricular support. Almost all young people benefit from regular wellbeing conversations with their guidance teacher. This strengthens relationships and helps them access appropriate supports. This also ensures that young people have a clear understanding of who they can go to when they need help and support. The guidance team should now consider how to further improve and enhance these discussions to include a focus on young people's progress and attainment.

- Senior leaders and house teams work effectively with important partners to support young people through a wide range of interventions. Partners such as community learning and development, health and social care and educational psychology provide advice and deliver group and individual work. Most young people achieve positive wellbeing outcomes as a result.
- Senior leaders collaborate with house staff and partners to develop plans that involve young people and parents in key decisions. These plans include strategies for classroom teachers, partners, and families. Senior staff should ensure individual targets are more specific, ambitious, and measurable to help young people understand their progress and next steps.
- The school has developed an Inclusion Hub to support young people who find it challenging to engage with learning. Staff track attendance and wellbeing for those referred to the Hub and meet regularly with house staff to review progress. The Hub supports most young people who attend the hub to sustain attendance and reflect on wellbeing. Staff should now consider how to measure the Hub's impact on raising attainment for all who attend.
- Young people who are care experienced and those who are young carers are supported very well by house teams, key staff, and partners. Staff track progress, attainment, and attendance monthly. Care-experienced young people share how they learn best through 'Helping You to See Me' profiles, helping them feel heard, respected, and included. All care experienced young people are considered for a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP). Young carers are offered a Young Carers Statement and benefit from supportive networks through the school-led group. These opportunities help young people build confidence and develop social skills.
- Most young people benefit from positive learning experiences in PSE. The programme is relevant, responsive, and progressive, enabling learners to reflect on social and health-related issues and develop healthy lifestyles. A range of partners support delivery, such as the Safer Communities Team, promoting the bystander approach through Mentors in violence prevention (MVP). Staff have worked with young people to identify themes for PSE. For example, most senior phase learners now study personal finance as part of their NQ in tenancy, giving them practical skills for managing money as they prepare to leave school.
- Young people learn about healthy, active lifestyles in subjects such as PE and home economics. As a result, most understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Staff offer a range of achievement opportunities through clubs during and beyond the school day which further support young people's understanding of leading healthy lifestyles. Staff should continue to develop more opportunities for young people to lead aspects of wellbeing, equality, and inclusion.
- Staff and partners have established a Mental Health Steering Group to promote positive mental wellbeing. The group shares high-quality resources and signposts young people to appropriate supports. Senior pupils have trained as mental health ambassadors, providing individual support and leading wellbeing clubs at break and lunchtimes. This promotes peer support and raises awareness of mental health and how to access help.

- Attendance has improved over the past three years and is in line with the national average. Senior leaders recognise that improving attendance remains a priority. House teams monitor attendance systematically and work well with families to address barriers. Targeted work develops emotional resilience, leading to improvements for most young people. For a few, individualised arrangements, such as reduced timetables, improve attendance and reduce anxiety. Senior leaders should ensure these arrangements are reviewed regularly with young people and parents to demonstrate progress and plan for a return to full-time education.
- The school has a well-planned transition programme developed with their linked primaries. It includes information sharing, activities for young people, family learning events, and enhanced transition planning for those with additional support needs. S6 Primary Ambassadors support curriculum activities in cluster schools, helping build confidence for children moving to secondary.
- The school has reviewed and updated its anti-bullying policy in line with national guidance. Senior leaders and guidance staff respond to patterns in bullying incidents. Recently, they worked with young people to develop anti-racism workshops following an increase in racism-related incidents. This has improved understanding of the impact of racist language and behaviours. Senior leaders should continue to embed a shared understanding of bullying and its consequences among young people, staff, and families.
- Staff work closely with young people to develop understanding of equalities and inclusion. This includes PSE lessons on gender, misogyny, and sexual orientation, and pupil-led workshops and assemblies on racism and hidden disabilities. Most young people understand difference and challenge discrimination. A few senior pupils act as MVPs, delivering workshops to promote gender equality and educate peers on sexual harassment. Most young people now recognise gender bias and inequality more clearly.
- Young people lead an equalities group to promote cultural awareness through initiatives such as 'Country of the Month' and the 'Cultural Bookcase' in the main foyer. There is a well-established Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) allies group and visible messages promoting respect across the school. All staff should now adopt a more strategic approach to embedding equalities within the wider curriculum and explore how to be more culturally responsive.
- Staff and pupils are proud of their work on promoting children's rights, which has achieved national accreditation. They continue to embed a rights agenda through assemblies, 'Right of the Fortnight,' PSE lessons, an S1 'Rights' period, and curriculum links. A rights-respecting group leads activities such as a book exchange and has developed an improvement plan to sustain rights-based approaches. This helps young people respect others and promote an inclusive community.

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

Overall Attainment

- Senior leaders recognise that further work is needed to raise attainment across the school. Improved systems are now in place to track and monitor progress over time in both the BGE and senior phase. Data is used effectively to identify trends and inform whole-school interventions. As a next step, senior leaders should develop a stronger strategic overview of interventions and their impact, with a particular focus on closing the attainment gap for identified learners.
- A whole-school strategy has been introduced, focusing on attendance, learning and teaching, tracking and monitoring and curriculum. Improving attendance has been a priority due to its negative impact on attainment. A presentation policy has been implemented to ensure learners are entered for appropriate course levels and complete courses successfully. Senior leaders should continue to review this policy to ensure learners are presented at the most challenging and ambitious level. These approaches are at an early stage, and it is too soon to measure their full impact on attainment outcomes.

Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy

Broad General Education (BGE)

Literacy

- Most learners achieved CfE third level by the end of S3 between 2021/22 and 2023/24. The majority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in 2023/24, showing an improving pattern over five years. This reflects strengthened moderation and increased teacher confidence in making judgements.

Numeracy

- Most learners achieved CfE third level in 2023/24, with performance improving from 2021/22 to 2023/24. Less than half of young people achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy in 2023/24. Further improvement is needed at both third and fourth levels.

Senior Phase – Leavers

Literacy

- Almost all leavers achieved SCQF level 4 or better from 2019/20 to 2023/24, significantly higher or much higher than the Virtual Comparator (VC) for the last three years. Most leavers achieved SCQF level 5 or better from 2021/22 to 2023/24, with attainment in 2023/24 being significantly higher than the VC. A minority of leavers achieved SCQF level 6, significantly lower or much lower than the VC from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

Numeracy

- Almost all leavers achieved SCQF level 4 or better from 2019/20 to 2023/24, significantly higher or much higher than the VC for 2021/22 to 2023/24. A majority of leavers achieved SCQF Level 5 or better between 2019/20 and 2023/24, with notable improvement in 2023/24. A few achieved SCQF level 6 in recent years, but performance is inconsistent and significantly lower than the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- As senior leaders have identified there is a need to improve attainment at SCQF level 6 in both literacy and numeracy. The introduction of a literacy unit at SCQF level 6 in 2025/26 and refreshed BGE mathematics courses are intended to support improvements over time.

ASN

- Almost all young people with an additional support need (ASN) 2022/23 and in 2023/24 achieved an SCQF level 4 award or better in literacy. Most achieved a level 5 award or better in 2023/24. For numeracy, almost all young people with an ASN achieved an SCQF level 4 award in 2021/22, 2022/24 and in 2023/24, A majority of young people with an ASN achieved an SCQF level 5 award or better in 2022/23 and in 2023/24.

Cohorts

Literacy

- At S4, almost all learners attained SCQF level 4 or better over five years, significantly higher than the VC in three of the latest years. Most attained SCQF level 5 or better in the last three years, with 2024/25 being the highest percentage in five years. By S5 and S6, most attained SCQF level 5 or better, in line with the VC. A minority attained SCQF level 6, which remains significantly lower or much lower than the VC for both S5 and S6.

Numeracy

- At S4, almost all learners achieved SCQF level 4 or better, significantly higher than the VC in four of the last five years. Most attained SCQF level 5 or better in 2024/25, showing an improving pattern despite a slight decline in 2023/24. At S5 and S6, a few learners attained SCQF level 6 in the last three years, significantly lower or much lower than the VC, although there was improvement in S5 in 2024/25 compared to previous years.

English

- Most young people in S4 presented for a National 5 (N5) English achieved a grade A–C pass over the last three years. This has remained below national figures since 2022/23. By S5, the

majority of young people presented attained Higher English grade A–C. Teachers should continue to focus on increasing presentation levels and improving pass rates.

Mathematics

- Attainment in N5 Mathematics in S4 has improved since 2022/23 when compared against the school's previous performance. A majority of young people presented have achieved a grade A–C pass since 2021/22, although this remains below national figures. The percentage of young people presented for N5 Applications of Mathematics in S4 is higher than the national level, but the grade A–C pass rate is lower.
- In S5, the majority of young people presented attained Higher Mathematics grades A–C, with improvements between 2022/23 and 2024/25. Positively, attainment in Higher Applications of Mathematics in S5 improved in 2024/25 and was above the national level for Grade A–C passes.

Attainment Over Time

BGE

- Young people experience learning across all curricular areas. Faculties have introduced moderation activities to support teacher judgements.
- A whole-school tracking system has recently been introduced to monitor attainment across all areas. The school is developing more consistent approaches to assessment and moderation to ensure increased reliability.
- Data shows almost all young people achieved CfE third level or better by the end of S3 in most curriculum areas, excluding Modern Languages, where only a minority continue with a language in S3.

Senior phase – Leavers

- Using average complementary tariff points, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers generally improved from 2020/21, with a small decline in 2023/24. This is broadly in line with the VC between 2019/20 and 2023/24. The middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of leavers shows a decline since 2020/21, with slight improvement in 2023/24. These remain significantly lower or much lower than the VC over the five years between 2019/20 and 2023/24.

Cohorts

- In S4, the lowest attaining 20% is in line with the VC for four years from 2021/22. The middle attaining 60% is significantly lower than the VC over five years, with slight improvement in 2024/25 compared to previous years. The highest attaining 20% is generally in line with the VC, except in 2024/25 where it is significantly lower. Attainment remains inconsistent.
- In S5 and S6 the lowest attaining 20% is in line with the VC in three of five years, with an inconsistent pattern of improvement. The middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% remain significantly lower or much lower than the VC from 2021/22 to 2024/25. Positively,

attainment for the highest attaining 20% in S5 has improved between 2021/22 and 2024/25 when compared against the school's own performance.

- Senior leaders and teachers have focused on improving attainment for the lowest attaining 20%. They recognise the need to prioritise improvement for the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people. An 'Assertive Mentoring' programme targeting the middle 60% has been introduced. Senior leaders should monitor its effectiveness with clear measurable outcomes.

ASN

- Young people in the middle attaining 60% and the highest attaining 20% who left school and have an additional support need performed significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC from 2019 to 2024.

Breadth and Depth

- At S4, most young people attain four or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better over five years, in line with the VC. Most achieve one or more courses at SCQF Level 5C or better, but less than half achieve three or more to five or more courses at this level. These measures are significantly lower or much lower than the VC over five years.
- In 2024/25, attainment at one or more to four or more awards was the highest in three years, showing improvement when compared against the school's own performance.
- By S5, a minority of young people attain one or more to three or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better over five years, significantly lower or much lower than the VC. A few young people attain one or more and two or more awards at SCQF Level 6A or better, also significantly lower or much lower than the VC. Patterns of improvement are inconsistent, except for SCQF Level 6C three or more awards, which shows improvement when compared against the school's own performance. The introduction of Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF level 6 has improved the percentage of young people attaining five or more whole-course awards at this level.
- By S6, at SCQF level 6C and 6A or better, there is no consistent pattern of improvement, and attainment remains significantly lower or much lower than the VC between 2021/22 and 2024/25. A few young people attain one or two or more awards at SCQF level 7C and level 7A, which is significantly lower than the VC.
- Senior leaders and teachers have broadened the senior phase curriculum offer, resulting in improvements in attainment at SCQF level 6 over the last three years when compared against the school's own performance. This includes SQA Awards, National Progression Awards and Foundation Apprenticeships in areas such as social services and healthcare and childcare and Senior leaders should continue to monitor the curriculum offer to ensure all courses add value to attainment.
- The percentage of passes and quality of passes at SCQF levels 5 and 6 requires improvement. Teachers need to support young people more effectively across S4–6 to raise attainment.

Clear strategies should be included in departmental plans, with greater challenge planned for learners.

Overall quality of learner's achievement

- Through a range of activities in and beyond the classroom, the majority of young people are becoming more confident and successful. A minority of senior pupils contribute to their community through volunteering, with a few young people gaining Saltire Awards. A majority participate in lunchtime and after-school clubs in sport, music, hobbies and cultural groups, including Japanese Club and Gardening. These experiences help them develop skills such as collaboration, communication and creativity. A few young people excel in sports, representing the school at local and national level. Staff should track participation more robustly and create new opportunities for those not currently involved. Establishing a clear strategy for raising achievement linked to school values would help measure success consistently.
- Opportunities for a few young people to benefit from outdoor learning are offered using school resources and the local environment. Increasing numbers of young people undertake the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at Bronze and Silver level each year, gaining life skills and taking responsibility for themselves and others. A few young people report positive impacts from teamwork and volunteering.
- Achievements are celebrated well through assemblies, newsletters, the school website, noticeboards, Prizegiving, and emails to families. Families are encouraged to share achievements and appreciate recognition. Young people increasingly take responsibility through roles such as delivering MVP, completing first aid certificates and acting as STEM Ambassadors. They have improved their confidence in public speaking, risk assessment and leadership as a result. A few young people build on these experiences to secure part-time jobs.
- Study support offered by staff to all young people reinforces learning, with some young people reporting improved study skills and greater responsibility for their learning. This is increasing the confidence levels of young people. The impact of study skills and the use of supported study should be continuously monitored to ensure its impact is maximised to improve outcomes for young people.

Equity for All Learners

- Staff closely track and monitor young people to support targeted interventions with positive impact. Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) supports initiatives such as STEPS and the Inclusion Hub, providing nurture and support for those young people who require these interventions to achieve their full potential. As a result, attendance is improving, and almost all young people achieve literacy and numeracy alongside other awards and qualifications. Literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 4 for S4 has been above the VC for five years and above the VC at SCQF level 5 for three years. Senior leaders should ensure robust tracking of the most disadvantaged young people leads to more timeous interventions to increase attainment and achievement.
- Staff and young people lead initiatives to reduce the cost of the school day, ensuring all learners can access education. Families are signposted to financial entitlements, and resources

such as uniform, food and household items are available through the school, supported by the 'Big Hoose' Fife Project. Senior leaders should develop processes to monitor the impact of these interventions on participation and explore ways to improve access to free school meals for those young people entitled to them.

- Young people who reside in SIMD 1 and 2 and who left school in 2023/24, performed significantly lower than the national average. For this young people, residing in SIMD 1, this was significantly much lower than the national figure in 2023/24.
- Strong collaboration with partners secures positive destinations for young people facing barriers to learning. Partnerships include Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Community Trade Hub and Fife College, providing pathways that have led to apprenticeships and sustained college courses for a few leavers.
- Almost all young people moved to an initial positive destination from 2021/22 to 2023/24, in line with the VC. For those in SIMD Quintile 1, there has been a positive trend over four years, rising from 89.47% in 2020/21 to 98.41% in 2023/24.

Quality of provision of Special Unit

Kirkcaldy High School Secondary Enhanced Provision (SEP) is accessed by 46 young people. Almost all young people are placed to the SEP by Fife Council. SEP comprises five classes, three in the BGE, and two in the senior phase. A deputy headteacher has overall responsibility for SEP and is supported by two principal teachers. Over the past few years, there has been a number of changes in promoted staff with responsibility for SEP. The principal teacher in post at the time of the inspection was appointed in August 2025.

Leadership of change

- The SEP is led well by the deputy headteacher and the principal teacher who have managed positively significant recent changes within the provision. They have a clear vision to improve the SEP through high-quality learning and teaching. School values are evident in daily interactions and relationships within the SEP with most young people demonstrating high levels of respect for each other
- Changes in staff with responsibility for SEP have impacted on approaches to continuous improvement. The recently created SEP improvement plan aligns well with the approaches to whole school improvement planning. Young people continue to benefit from high-quality supportive relationships and positive learning environments. They feel cared for and their pastoral needs are met. Moving forward, there is a need to ensure a broad BGE curriculum offer with progressive senior phase pathways that raises attainment for all. This should be included as a priority area within school improvement planning.
- Whole school quality assurance processes include tracking and monitoring the progress of young people in SEP. These processes are at the early stages of implementation. Senior leaders, as planned, need to continue to rigorously monitor learning and teaching accessed by young people. Approaches do not yet evidence that all young people make very good progress in their learning.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- Almost all relationships across the SEP are positive with young people benefitting from caring and nurturing environments. Most staff plan well learning environments that support young people to regulate their emotions. Staff are clear about prioritising each young person's pastoral and wellbeing needs, taking appropriate account of their views. Teaching and support staff use praise and encouragement very well on an individual basis. Their approaches sensitively support young people to participate and engage in their learning.
- Most class teachers provide clear explanations and share the purpose of learning well. A few use effective questioning to deepen each young person's learning on an individual basis. Young people are confident working individually on set tasks. Across the SEP, the whole class approach to learning affects the pace of learning for the majority of young people. Assessment approaches are less well developed and young people are not clear about their strengths and next steps in learning. There are too many missed opportunities to deepen young people's knowledge and for them to collaborate effectively.

- Teachers' recent approaches to improving planning are at the early stages of implementation. They now beginning to plan learning more appropriately across most areas of the BGE. Young people develop important skills accessing learning delivered by specialists in the mainstream school. Almost half of young people in the senior phase learn alongside their mainstream peers in a few classes. As planned, senior leaders need to ensure young people are supported more effectively to learn alongside their peers in mainstream classes.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Staff proactively promote each young person's wellbeing. Interactions between staff and young people are respectful and supportive. Young people feel safe, valued and are developing their confidence very well.
- Young people share their views with staff on an ongoing basis well. Most feel they are listened to and that their views are taken into account. Staff sensitively support young people to develop their skills of regulation. Parents and partners are increasingly included in review meetings. There is an opportunity for young people to be involved more often in regular and focused conversations about their wellbeing and their learning more broadly.
- Almost all staff have a clear understanding of their statutory duties and responsibilities. They participate in child protection training and professional learning to support the wellbeing of young people.
- Young people are included in the life and work of the school. They can access lunchtime clubs and after school clubs. Although young people are included, their participation relies on them being proactive and is not yet monitored effectively. As planned, there is a need for senior leaders to ensure equity of opportunities for young people in the SEP with their mainstream peers.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Overall, almost all young people in SEP make satisfactory progress in their literacy and English and in numeracy and mathematics. Almost all young people in the BGE are working within CfE levels from early level through to second level. There is scope for the majority of young people to make better progress.
- In literacy in the BGE, the majority of young people listen well and respond appropriately to oral tasks. Their fluency in reading aloud is variable and a few engage in characterisation well. There is a need for young people to engage in a broader range of texts and develop their talking skills in discussions more effectively. At the senior phase, young people attain National Qualifications at SCQF levels 2 and 3
- In numeracy in the BGE, young people are developing their understanding of money through real life contexts related to needs and wants. At the senior phase young people are attaining national qualifications in mathematics at SCQF levels 2 and 3.
- Almost all young people make satisfactory progress, and a few make good progress in a few areas of their learning. Attendance is improving for a few young people and there is a need, as

planned, for senior leaders to continue to improve attendance further. More young people now move to positive destinations than in previous years.

- Staff celebrate young people's achievements in activities well by sharing their successes with parents, carers and the wider school community. Senior leaders are at the early stages of ensuring young people access a broad range of high-quality opportunities for wider achievement.
- Staff have an appropriate understanding and young people's social, economic and cultural context. They consider well young people's needs such as disability and family circumstances. There is a need to increase the focus on reducing inequity and link this to whole school approaches.

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.