

Summarised inspection findings

Dunblane High School

Stirling Council

24 March 2026

Key contextual information

School Name:	Dunblane High School
Council:	Stirling Council
SEED number:	5722438
Roll (December 2025):	853

Dunblane High School is a six-year, non-denominational school in the town of Dunblane. The headteacher has been in post since 2016 and is supported by three depute headteachers and a resource manager.

Attendance is generally above the national average. Exclusions are generally in line with the national average.

In September 2024, less than 5 % of pupils were registered for free school meals. In September 2024, less than 5 % of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In September 2024, the school reported that 37 % of pupils had additional support needs (ASN).

The percentage of leavers in S4 and S5 is lower than the national average.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- In almost all lessons, there are very positive relationships between staff and young people. Almost all young people feel respected by staff and their peers. Young people are supportive and kind to each other. They feel motivated by staff who encourage them to do the best they can in their learning. Young people trust their teachers and believe their teachers know them very well. Young people recognise and appreciate that they are encouraged to embrace the school motto 'Prospice Ultra Montes', which translates to 'look beyond the mountains', through developing a range of skills, abilities and attributes. These attributes support young people well as they progress through their time at Dunblane High School and beyond.
- Staff have developed a strong, clear and shared understanding of what constitutes effective practice in learning, teaching and assessment. This practice is captured in the very helpful '7 Elements of a highly effective lesson' framework. These seven elements were developed by teachers following extensive research and enquiry. As well as informing teachers' ongoing professional learning, this framework is supporting a greater consistency in the quality of learning and teaching approaches across the school. Senior leaders have introduced well-considered 'open door' and 'tri-learning' approaches to support teachers' development in learning and teaching. Teachers observe and share their practice. This approach to professional learning is supporting teachers well to learn and receive feedback from each other. Overall, the wider work of the learning and teaching and assessment group is having a positive impact on improving the quality of teacher's classroom practice. Teachers have worked very well with young people to develop their understanding of themselves as learners. As a result, young people have a strong awareness of the best approaches to support them with their learning. Senior leaders should now consider how best to monitor and evaluate the impact of these whole school approaches to sharing highly effective practice.
- Almost all teachers use effective starter activities to motivate young people. In most lessons, these engage young people quickly and revisit prior learning. In most classes, teachers identify and share the purpose of learning and how young people can evaluate whether they have been successful in their learning. This supports most young people well to understand the progress they are making during their lessons.
- In almost all lessons, explanations and instructions are clear and teachers use questioning appropriately to check young people's understanding and knowledge. In a significant minority of lessons, teachers use high-quality questioning. This supports young people to think deeply about their learning, to challenge thinking and develop ideas. Almost all young people are

highly motivated by, and engage confidently with, a wide variety of learning experiences in classes. In most lessons, there is an appropriate pace of learning. In most lessons young people are challenged well. A few teachers could make better use of work which is appropriately adapted to better support the needs of all learners.

- In all departments, teachers use digital platforms very well to support young people's learning. Young people value being able to access a range of resources in class and at home. The use of these digital platforms supports young people to study independently and take greater responsibility for their learning. A few young people with additional support needs (ASN) use digital technology to support their learning very effectively. Staff have identified the need to continue to develop creative digital approaches. A few staff work with a highly skilled group of young people to support and embed innovative digital approaches to enhance learning, teaching, and assessment across the school.
- Almost all young people benefit from highly effective and regular ongoing verbal and written feedback from their teachers. Feedback is also delivered effectively through digital platforms. Teachers use a range of approaches very well to support young people to evaluate their learning. As a result, most young people are confident in describing their progress in their learning and identifying their next steps in learning. Teachers relentless focus on providing high-quality feedback to learners and engagement in learner conversations to support them to understand the progress they are making and their next steps in learning is a major strength.
- Almost all teachers use summative assessment well to measure young people's progress across all stages. This supports detailed learner conversations across both the broad general education (BGE) and the senior phase. As a result, almost all young people know how they are progressing. Young people value highly this opportunity to discuss their learning with their teachers. Most teachers use formative assessment strategies appropriately during lessons including, 'show-me' boards and exit passes, to check for understanding. These types of activities are supporting most young people very well to progress in their learning. In both the BGE and senior phase, teachers should continue to build on their expertise in the use of a wide variety of summative and formative assessment approaches. Teachers should consider how this information is used to support more effectively the adaptation of their teaching and help inform their planning.
- Most staff engage in well-considered moderation activities within their curricular areas across all stages. This is helping to build capacity and confidence to plan learning and assess progress of young people. A few staff have benefitted from well-planned moderation activities beyond the school. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to engage in moderation across and beyond the school.
- Teachers across most departments undertake duties for the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). This is resulting in high teacher confidence in the application and understanding of the assessment standards required for National Qualifications. These teachers support others well to understand and apply national standards. The school has well established internal systems to support confidence in judgements within the BGE and senior phase.
- In all departments teachers use Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and benchmarks effectively to plan and assess young people within the broad general education (BGE). Within the senior phase SQA course standards are used very well to plan courses and

effectively assess young people. In all departments there are well considered departmental tracking and monitoring systems in place. This is supporting all staff to have a strong understanding of learners' progress. Teachers use this information well to plan appropriately for classes and to better identify individual young people who are not on track in their learning. Departments are using a range of appropriate interventions to support young people well to make better progress in their learning. Young people appreciate the individual support and signposting that teachers provide to help them improve. However, there are currently inconsistencies across a few departments in the language used to show progress within the BGE. Senior leaders should now work with staff to develop a consistent approach to the language of assessment across curricular areas in the BGE. This will support all staff to use this data to plan learning more effectively when considering progress within and across subjects.

- Parents and young people receive regular 'data drops' which provide a snapshot of learners' progress. This is supporting almost all young people in the senior phase and most young people in the BGE to speak confidently about knowing their strengths and next steps in learning.

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.

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

The headteacher and senior leaders work very well with staff to ensure that there are high aspirations for all young people in line with the school's mission statement, 'supporting all young people to do their best, be their best and improve outcomes for all.' Overall, there are strong, sustained levels of attainment at all stages across the school, with consistently very strong levels of high-quality of passes within the senior phase. In many instances, young people are attaining higher than other young people of a similar background.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

Broad General Education (BGE)

- Young people attain very well at CfE third and fourth level literacy and numeracy and are sustaining these high standards over time.
- The school have maintained very high levels of performance in literacy and numeracy from 2021/22 to 2023/24. Attainment at CfE third and fourth levels in literacy and numeracy has consistently been above local authority and national averages over this period.
- Between 2021/22 to 2023/24, by the end of S3, almost all young people achieved CfE third level in literacy. Most young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy. In numeracy all young people achieved CfE third level, and almost all achieved CfE fourth level. Young people with an additional support need (ASN) make very good progress. By the end of S3, in literacy, almost all young people achieve CfE third level, and the majority achieve fourth level. In numeracy, almost all young people achieve CfE fourth level, by the end of S3.
- The assessment evidence underpinning these professional judgements of young people's progress is reliable and robust. Teachers within the English and mathematics departments engage well in moderation and verification activities which ensures that their professional assessment judgements are valid. Staff use assessment information from the associated primaries very well to ensure that young people continue to make positive progress from their prior attainment. Staff within the mathematics department have recently used this data to introduce a numeracy intervention for a targeted group of young people in S1. Young people in the senior phase have been trained and support the delivery of this intervention. There are early indications that identified young people are making better progress in their learning in mathematics as a result of this intervention.

Senior Phase

Leavers

- Attainment in literacy and numeracy by young people who leave school is consistently strong.
- Almost all young people leaving school between 2021/22 and 2023/24 achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better in literacy. This has been broadly in line with the virtual comparator (VC) for each of these years. The majority of young people leaving school between 2021/22 and 2023/24 achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy. Literacy levels at SCQF level 6 have improved over the three-year period. This was significantly lower than the virtual comparator in 2022/23 and improved to be in line with the VC in 2023/24. There are broadly similar improvements in attainment in literacy for young people who require additional support for their learning.
- Most young people leaving school between 2021/22 and 2023/24 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. This is in line with the VC over this period. Attainment in numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better has improved over the three-year period. A significant minority of young people leaving school between 2021/22 and 2023/24 achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This has been broadly in line with the VC. There are broadly similar improvements in attainment in numeracy for young people who require additional support for their learning.

Cohorts

- Young people perform well in literacy and numeracy as they move through the school.
- At S4, almost all young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy between 2021/22 and 2024/25, which is in line with the VC. By S5, based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy between 2021/22 and 2024/25, in line with the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy in 2021/22 and 2022/23, this increased to most young people in 2023/24 and 2024/25. This is in line with the VC.
- At S4, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in 2021/22 and 2022/23, in line with the VC. This increased to most young people in 2023/24, in line with the VC. This increased further in 2024/25 to almost all young people, significantly higher than the VC. By S5, based on the S4 roll, a minority young people achieved SCQF level 6 between 2021/22 and 2024/25, in line with the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy between 2021/22 and 2024/25, in line with the VC.

National Qualifications

- The percentage of young people being presented for National 5 (N5) and Higher qualifications in English and mathematics has remained above or in line with national averages for the last five years. Young people's attainment in both subjects and levels has been consistently high over this period, when compared to national averages. Notably, the quality of A passes is consistently above national averages. Senior leaders have recently introduced the N5 and Higher Applications of Mathematics qualifications. To date young people attain above the national average at grades A-C. There are a few young people in S4 who have been presented for Higher Maths over the last four years. Their attainment is consistently very high.

Attainment over time

BGE

- Young people are attaining consistently very well by the end of S3 across almost all curricular areas. They are sustaining these high standards over time. This supports young people very well to make very good progress in the senior phase. This is a major strength of the school.
- Almost all young people, by the end of S3, achieve CfE third level in almost all curricular areas and fourth level in most curricular areas, outwith literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics.
- Attainment in the BGE is sustained across curricular areas over time. Teachers and middle leaders track learners' progress very effectively at departmental level. This information is captured regularly within highly effective tracking systems at whole school level regularly.

Senior phase

Improving attainment for all

Leavers

- Based on average complementary tariff scores, the performance of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers in 2023/24 has improved to be in line with VC, having previously been significantly lower or much lower than VC between 2020/21 and 2022/23. The middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of leavers has been consistently in line with the VC from 2021/22 to 2023/24. The attainment of the lowest attaining 20% and middle 60% of leavers improved from 2022/23 to 2023/24. Between 2021/22 and 2023/24 the attainment of the highest attaining 20% of leavers is variable. Generally, young people who require additional support with their learning show a similar pattern of attainment.

Cohorts

- The attainment of the lowest 20% and middle 60% of young people, when using complementary tariff points, improves as they progress through the senior phase. Their attainment moves from being in line with the VC in S4 to significantly higher than the VC in S5 and S6. Senior leaders and staff should continue to consider how the attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people can improve further.
- At S4 and by S5, based on the S4 roll, from 2020/21 to 2024/25 the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people is generally in line with the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, young people's attainment has improved from in line with the VC in 2021/22 and 2022/23 to significantly higher than the VC in 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- At S4, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people has improved. It is significantly higher than the VC in 2024/25. By S5, based on the S4 roll, young people have attained significantly higher than the VC in three of the last five years. By S6, based on the S4 roll they have attained significantly higher than the VC in four of the last five years.
- At S4, the attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people has been in line with the VC for the last five years. By S5, based on the S4 roll, they have attained significantly higher than the VC in two of the last five years, including 2024/25. By S6, based on the S4 roll, young people have attained in line with the VC for the last four years.

Breadth and depth

- Senior leaders have an aspirational presentation policy that has high expectations of young people. There is an expectation that young people who begin a qualification complete that qualification. As a result, young people, across the senior phase are generally attaining very well.
- Young people's attainment in National Qualifications is very good across almost all curricular areas within the senior phase. In almost all subject areas, the percentage of high-quality passes in SQA national qualifications is consistently above the national average.
- At S4, young people have consistently attained very well over the last three years. The percentage of young people achieving five or more to seven or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better has improved to be significantly higher than the VC in 2024/25, having previously been sustained to be in line with VC since 2022/23. The percentage of young people achieving one or more to five or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better has improved to be significantly higher than the VC in 2024/25, having previously been sustained to be in line with VC since 2022/23. S4 performance at seven or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better has improved over the last three years.
- By S5, the percentage of young people achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better has been significantly higher than the VC in two of the last three years, including 2024/25. The percentage of young people achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better has improved from 2022/23 to 2024/25. In the most recent year this is significantly higher than the VC.
- By S6, the percentage of young people achieving three or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better has been significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC in four of the last five years. The percentage of young people achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better has improved to be significantly higher than the VC in 2024/25. The percentage of young people achieving two or more awards at SCQF level 7C and 7A or better has increased from 2022/23 to 2024/25. This is now significantly higher than the VC in 2024/25 after previously sustained in line.
- A range of appropriately challenging SCQF courses at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 are delivered in school. In addition, there are a range of SCQF courses that young people can complete off campus, in conjunction with a range of partners. As a result, over time an increasing number of young people are achieving additional appropriate SCQF qualifications, in addition to their strong attainment in national qualifications.
- There are very effective tracking systems in place at faculty and whole school level. Teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders analyse this data regularly which allows effective identification of young people at risk of not achieving. Where this is identified appropriate targeted interventions and supports are put in place to support young people to maximise their attainment.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- There is a very strong culture of participation and achievement across the school. Young people benefit from an extensive programme of wider activities, including music, sports, art and drama. They develop a wide set of skills for learning, life and work through participation.

Young people develop skills in performing and build confidence through various musical clubs. They also improve their fitness levels and skill acquisition through sport. Young people recognise and can articulate the skills they are developing very well. As a next step, staff should support young people to record how they are developing and using their skills in different contexts.

- Almost all young people in S1-3 participate in an activity either in or out of school, this is tracked very well by key staff. The data is analysed and used effectively to identify those who are not participating. This information has resulted in the remaining few young people not involved being supported to join appropriate activities. This supports their sense of belonging to the school. Young people appreciate how their views are listened to and acted on to shape school-based activities. Young people, particularly in the upper stages, are empowered to introduce and lead new activities such as the Rights Respecting Schools club, orienteering and cricket. Young people talk confidently about developing their leadership and responsibility, especially through clubs and activities which they have initiated and now lead themselves. Senior leaders should increase the ways in which young people can gain accreditation through their work.
- The well-established interhouse programme across S1-6 contributes to a strong sense of community throughout the school. Young people speak very highly of the regular competitions, activities and events, such as sports, music, chess and creative competitions. Senior leaders are at the early stages of tracking participation of interhouse events.
- Young people achieve very highly in a range of musical, sporting and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) activities within and beyond school. Commendably, a significant number of young people compete in competitions at regional, national and international level. This includes sports, orienteering, science, maths and music. Young people speak confidently about their commitment, responsibility and resilience that they have developed. For example, the robotics group have been extremely successful in represented the school locally, nationally and internationally. A few young people involved in these events have been offered work experience placements and scholarships and have clear aspirations and pathways to work in STEM. Young people are very confident in articulating how they have developed their problem-solving, communication and research skills.
- A significant number of young people are developing their life skills, communication and teamwork through participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DoE) at bronze, silver and gold levels. The young people involved are contributing to the life of the school and the community through an extensive number of volunteering hours.
- There is a positive and inclusive environment across the school that recognises and celebrates effort and achievement. Young people's successes and achievements are celebrated very well at departmental and school level. Young people appreciate the variety of ways achievement is recognised. This recognition includes the merit system, student praise postcards, values certificates and formal effort and achievement ceremonies. In addition, young people who achieve success in sports, DoE or creative arts have separate formal showcase or awards ceremonies. The young people-led 'Press Team' play an important role in capturing and celebrating achievements across the school in a creative and innovative way. They

demonstrate high levels of organisation, confidence and communication skills through their weekly bulletin and fortnightly in school Dunblane TV.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and pupil support staff track the progress and attainment of young people who may face barriers to learning and attainment very effectively. This includes a specific focus on monitoring attendance and participation of young people who are care experienced, have additional support needs, receive free school meals or are young carers. Most of these young people are participating in wider activities and are attaining very well. A next step for senior leaders is to have a more strategic approach to measuring the impact of all interventions.
- Pupil equity funding (PEF) is used very effectively to ensure young people affected by socio-economic disadvantage are supported to attain and achieve. Staff employed through PEF support young people and families very well with engagement in school, which is improving the attendance of a few young people. Young people and families benefit from the accessibility of a well-maintained uniform hub, Team TOM tackling period equity and extended parent payment plans for school trips. These supports and resources remove barriers to participation and engagement in school which is contributing to young people making very good progress.
- Young people who require additional support are supported very well in 'The hub'. A wide range of support staff provide a range of effective learning and wellbeing interventions to help meet the needs of targeted young people. This includes literacy groups, study skills, staged intervention check ins for young people and wellbeing programmes. Young people who receive this support are developing confidence with their inter-personal skills, improving literacy skills and achieving appropriate qualifications. The introduction of this facility has contributed to a significant reduction in exclusions over a four-year period and has improved attendance for targeted young people.
- Senior and middle leaders have clear processes in place to track, monitor and improve young people's attendance. Overall, attendance is consistently above the national average. Persistent absence rates are consistently below the national average. The school has effective processes to track and scrutinise attendance for targeted groups of young people. There are two additional members of staff who support tracking and improving targeted young people's attendance through a variety of interventions.
- The active ASN parent group and key staff members work together to reduce barriers to young people achieving and attaining. Staff have been developing their knowledge and practice in supporting young people who are neurodivergent. This is developing staffs understanding of how to support the young people in class. Senior leaders and staff should continue to extend this work to impact on classroom practice. As a result, young people with additional support needs are making very good progress.
- Almost all young people between 2019/20 and 2023/24 entered and sustained a positive destination on leaving school. Senior leaders, with identified staff and partners monitor closely the intended destinations for young people and signpost employability opportunities where appropriate. Bespoke pathways, supported by the local authority and school staff, are supporting targeted young people into positive destinations.

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. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- Young people experience their entitlement to two periods of high-quality PE from S1-S4. Young people receive their entitlement to religious and moral education from S1-S6. Senior leaders should ensure young people in the BGE access their full entitlement to study modern languages in line with the Scottish Government's 1 + 2 languages policy.

Practice worth sharing more widely

There is a very strong culture of participation and achievement across the school. There is an extensive range of activities and achievements offered by staff or introduced and led by young people. This includes young people representing their school at local, national and international level. This extensive range supports young people at all stages to develop further their skills for learning, life and work. In addition, young people's achievements are widely celebrated not only by staff but their peers. For example, a team of young people within the 'Press Team' create and run DHS TV, fortnightly to celebrate young people's achievements. This is shared within the school and local community.

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.

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