

# Summarised inspection findings

**Castlehead High School**

**Renfrewshire Council**

**20 January 2026**

## Key contextual information

School Name: Castlehead High School

Council: Renfrewshire

SEED number: 8628939

Roll (Sep 2025): 737

Castlehead High School is a six-year non-denominational school in the Paisley area of Renfrewshire. The school's main catchment area covers Paisley west and the village of Elderslie. The school has three associated primary schools. The catchment areas are a mix of local authority, traditional and new housing in urban environments. Many pupils travel by bus to school from Elderslie.

The headteacher has been in post for three years. He is supported by four deputy headteachers (DHTs).

In 2023/24, attendance was generally in line with the national average. Exclusions were above the national average in 2022/23. Senior leaders report a reduction in exclusions in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. Less than half of the S4 cohort in 2022/23 still attended school for S6 in 2024/25.

In September 2024, 22.4% of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2024, 42.6% of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2024, the school reported that 43.3% of pupils had additional support needs (ASN).

### 1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 highly regarded headteacher is very visible and approachable. He leads the school with compassion. He works very effectively with senior leaders and others to provide an ambitious vision and clear strategic direction for the school. Most stakeholders feel listened to and that concerns are dealt with quickly and well as a result of the trusting and supportive culture and ethos. The strong relationships between senior leaders and staff, together with well-planned self-evaluation activities, help the headteacher monitor the pace of change effectively.
- All staff and young people have a very strong understanding of the school values of ambition, respect and kindness. The whole school community, led very well by the headteacher, recently contributed to the development of these very relevant, visible and impactful values. The values clearly drive the work of senior leaders and staff to improve the learning experiences and outcomes for all young people. Almost all staff and young people enjoy very strong positive relationships, based on a clear and shared understanding of the values. Most teachers refer regularly to the values during lessons and when using the house points rewards system.
- Senior leaders have developed an effective quality improvement policy which details robust systems and processes to ensure that all planned improvement activities focus on improving outcomes for young people. Senior leaders have developed a very supportive and collaborative approach to whole school improvement with all staff. Senior leaders effectively use a range of data, direct observations, and views of the school community to help identify school improvement priorities. The current school improvement plan (SIP) is part of a three-year improvement cycle with clear, measurable expected outcomes. The SIP details highly relevant improvement priorities. Detailed departmental improvement plans (DIPs) outlining next steps at departmental level, link well to the SIP.
- Almost all middle leaders are strongly committed to the strategic direction of the school and ensure there is a clear focus on improvement priorities. Middle leaders are empowered very effectively by senior leaders to focus relentlessly on improving experiences for young people. This includes well-planned departmental reviews, regular learning walks, teacher observations and ongoing, robust self-evaluation of the DIP. Together with regular, focused and robust discussions regarding pedagogy and tracking and monitoring, this is leading to improved and more consistent learning experiences for young people in most subjects.

- Most staff feel that their opinions are valued and that they are involved in agreeing and planning improvement priorities. A majority of teachers lead on a wide variety of activities and projects, which link well to the school priorities. These include impact coaches to support learning and teaching, effective partnership work to improve post-school destinations and developing how staff track young people's wellbeing. Senior leaders should continue to monitor closely the impact of improvement projects to ensure the various activities have the desired impact of improving outcomes for young people.
- A significant minority of young people, especially in the senior phase, contribute well to improving the school through a range of leadership roles. These include the school Senate, members of the Pupil Parliament and Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP). These young people develop confidence and improve their communication and organisational skills. The Young Leaders of Learning (YLL) lead important changes to learning and teaching. Their views and proposals have been well received and actioned by teachers across the school through their clear and well-considered plan to improve young people's experiences. This is a strength of the improvement work of the school. The YLL have initiated the development and implementation of a common learning wall for every classroom. This helps young people understand the 'Castlehead Lesson Cycle'. Senior leaders should continue to develop further opportunities for young people, particularly in the broad general education (BGE), to participate in leadership roles.
- All teachers engage with professional review and development (PRD) processes, which link well to the General Teaching Council for Scotland professional standards. Senior leaders ensure that PRD and career long professional learning (CLPL) are focused on improving learning and teaching. Senior leaders plan in-school CLPL very effectively and identify useful external learning opportunities. Almost all staff feel that they are supported very well to undertake high-quality CLPL in school, across the local authority and with other organisations. The school's offer and staff commitment to CLPL is a significant strength in supporting improvement in key priority areas, including nurturing and restorative approaches. Staff are empowered to share effective practices with colleagues as part of the CLPL offer. These activities support strongly the positive relationships and purposeful learning environments across the school.
- Support for learning staff recognise the need to ensure support provided by ASN assistants is planned well to meet the needs of young people. Commendably, support staff receive regular professional learning and have time to plan support in conjunction with teachers.
- All staff have a very clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school. Senior leaders work effectively with key staff, partners and the Parent Council, to develop a clear plan for the deployment of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The strategy is leading to improved outcomes for individual and groups of identified young people.
- Staff responsible for Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) have a clear vision for developing the curriculum in line with DYW priorities. Senior leaders have identified and nurtured a wide range of very effective partnerships that provide strong support for young people as they prepare to leave school. Staff work well with partners to ensure a wide range of pathways and options are available. Senior leaders communicate very effectively with these partners and evaluate their impact. This helps young people sustain positive destinations in education, training and work.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

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

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

- Almost all young people benefit from very positive and caring relationships with staff which creates calm and nurturing learning environments. Young people appreciate the support they receive from staff both inside and beyond the classroom. Young people and staff are proud to be part of a caring school community. The purposeful learning environments reflect the school's values of ambition, respect and kindness.
- A few young people require support at times to regulate their behaviour and emotions, and staff provide this skilfully. Senior leaders and pupil support staff use local authority behaviour risk assessments to provide clear guidance and strategies to staff on meeting the needs of these young people. Staff's ongoing focus on restorative approaches and their whole-school commitment to nurturing principles is supporting a calm learning environment. The number of young people excluded from school has decreased from 2022/23 to 2024/25. There has been a reduction in recorded incidents of persistent disruptive behaviour and violent incidents over time.
- The 'Castlehead Lesson Cycle', developed in partnership with the YLL, is leading to improvements in the consistency and routines of learning in all classes. All staff use aspects of the learning cycle in their planning of learning, teaching and assessment. Young people value the clear consistent structure of lessons which enhances their readiness to learn. Teachers regularly reflect and act on young people's ongoing feedback when designing courses, lessons and assessments. This collaborative approach is supporting a culture where young people feel valued and empowered from their active engagement in shaping their learning. Teachers should continue to work together to develop a shared understanding of high-quality approaches to each aspect of the lesson cycle.
- Almost all teachers recognise and demonstrate an awareness of the differing needs of individual young people. A minority of teachers make very good use of the high-quality pupil profiles provided by specialist staff. These teachers use this information well to plan and adapt their lessons. This leads to improvements in engagement of young people. However, learning is not consistently adapted to meet the needs of all learners. This limits engagement for a few young people and, in some cases, results in low-level off-task behaviour. There is a need for all teachers to make good use of pupil profiles to plan appropriately supportive and challenging learning for all young people.
- Most teachers use well-paced and effectively planned starter activities to consolidate prior learning. This encourages the majority of young people to engage quickly and purposefully

with tasks and learning. In almost all lessons, teachers share effectively the purpose of learning and how young people will know they have been successful. This helps young people understand better what they need to do and how to measure their progress. A minority of teachers use plenaries very effectively to review young people's progress. Teachers should continue to develop the quality of learning intentions, success criteria and plenaries to support all young people to articulate what successful learning looks like. This should support improvements in the pace and challenge of activities experienced by all young people. A few young people need to be challenged to attain and achieve more.

- Most teachers make effective use of digital platforms. This enables young people to access resources such as class notes, presentations, and assignments in class and at home. Young people welcome being able to use digital platforms to extend and recap their learning.
- Most teachers use questioning well to check for understanding. Teachers use strategies that include the use of 'show-me' boards and electronic quizzes well to encourage young people to think more deeply. Most young people are motivated by these approaches which help them progress in their learning. A minority of teachers use high-quality questioning well which leads them to make appropriate adaptations to lessons. These approaches help young people engage fully and understand the progress they are making. Senior leaders should continue to work with staff to share this effective practice more widely across the school.
- Staff recently reviewed how they use assessment in the BGE and created the 'Castlehead Learner Centred Assessment Strategy'. This supports teachers well to enhance their knowledge and understanding of how assessment supports learning. Most teachers use effectively a broad range of assessment approaches to help young people demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. The majority of teachers also support young people well by offering helpful verbal and written feedback. Most young people in the BGE are aware of their current level of learning. All teachers should continue to develop assessments set at the correct level of challenge for all young people. These assessments should also help all young people understand better what they need to do to improve.
- A new approach to senior phase assessment helps most young people understand their progress and improve their learning. Almost all teachers engage in highly-effective learner conversations with young people. Teachers set relevant and meaningful target grades and identify high-quality resources to help young people strengthen their learning. Most young people value and benefit from these discussions with their teachers. They recognise that the feedback and support from their teachers helps them understand their progress and next steps. As this new approach to assessment develops, senior leaders should evaluate its effectiveness to ensure it supports fully all young people to achieve as highly as possible.
- In the BGE, all teachers use confidently the national Benchmarks to plan learning activities at third and fourth Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Learning activities are planned to incorporate a range and variety of assessments. Teachers are becoming increasingly more confident at adapting teaching to better support young people to access learning. Teachers should increase the level of challenge to support more young people more effectively as they move to the senior phase, where learning becomes more demanding.
- Almost a third of teachers across almost all curricular areas, are Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) appointees. These teachers share their experiences and expertise well to

support the planning of learning across the school in the senior phase. This helps teachers have a strong, shared understanding of assessment standards in the senior phase. Teachers are also supported, where available, by local authority subject groups. This has led to improved reliability in assessment judgements for National Qualifications (NQs).

- Almost all principal teachers have effective departmental processes to track young people's progress. In most departments, teachers use this information well to identify young people who are not making enough progress and to plan suitable learning activities. Senior leaders should now consider how these departmental processes, along with new assessment approaches, can be improved to support more effectively young people progress further in their learning.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers in the English and mathematics departments use information from primary schools relating to literacy and numeracy attainment well to plan to build on prior learning. As a result, transition pathways for young people in English and mathematics are well planned. Staff in the mathematics department have developed a highly effective numeracy and mathematics transition project with associated primary schools. This is used well to support better progression in mathematics and numeracy. This effective practice should be extended to more curricular areas. Middle leaders are aware that courses across all curricular areas in S1 need to provide better continuity and progression. They should build more effectively on what children have learned and achieved at primary school.
- All teachers develop courses across the BGE in line with CfE. Teachers plan learning using third and fourth CfE level outcomes for almost all young people in S1 and S2. In S3, young people make choices about their learning pathway. A few young people, who require additional support with their learning, benefit from individualised learning pathways throughout the BGE. In S3, young people specialise by choosing seven subjects. There is an aspect of free choice for young people in S3. Senior leaders need to monitor closely the progress of young people who do not access their full entitlements to a BGE. All young people in S3 experience three electives as part of the S3 skills offer. Young people recognise how these electives are improving their skills for learning, life and work.
- Staff support young people well to make choices in a range of ways. For example, conversations with individual teachers after tracking periods, individual appointments with the careers advisor and helpful individual interviews. In almost all subjects, the curriculum in S3 is planned around fourth CfE level and Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) NQs at levels 4 and 5. Young people are clear about the options available to them, and most young people in the senior phase feel that the well-informed decisions they made in S2 have supported them to progress well. Senior leaders should review some aspects of the S3 offer to ensure young people benefit from high-quality learning experiences throughout the BGE.
- The senior phase curriculum is well planned to ensure an extensive range of options for all young people. The wide range of well-considered pathways meets the needs of most young people. Staff work well to personalise the options and activities on offer. These include a well-planned and coordinated range of programmes from SCQF levels 4 to 8, Skills for Work courses, National Progressions Awards, Foundation Apprenticeships and access to some Open University options. A few young people engage well with The School of Creativity programmes where they develop a wide range of creativity skills. Opportunities for wider achievement feature well and young people are supported well to develop their interests. Most young people who engage with the college link attain and achieve well.
- Senior leaders and staff work very effectively with a range of community partners to continually develop the range of opportunities for young people to enhance their skills and to achieve. In particular, there is a strong focus on supporting young people from identified groups such as those who are care-experienced, asylum seekers and refugees and those with challenging behaviours. Staff are at the early stages of implementing a skills framework, primarily based on the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) meta-skills model. Almost all staff

and most young people are aware of these skills and are beginning to understand how to record and use them.

- Young people receive their entitlement to modern language learning as part of the Language Learning in Scotland 1+2 approach. However, young people do not receive their core entitlement to Religious and Moral Education (RME) in S5 and S6. Senior leaders are aware of the need to develop clear plans to address the gaps in the delivery of entitlements.
- Senior leaders have plans in place to develop further a consistent shared strategy for ensuring literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across the school. They should now accelerate progress in these areas.
- The school has a well-resourced library. Staff from the English and languages departments use this resource to plan a range of activities for young people. More staff could make more use of this useful resource.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Senior leaders, staff and partners work well together to develop effective approaches to engage with parents. These include a broad range of well-received communication such as the headteacher's weekly update, social media, the school website, information evenings and surveys. Most parents feel confident that staff respond quickly and effectively to address any concerns they may have.
- A majority of parents feel they receive information at the right time to support their child's transitions, course choices and to prepare for assessments. Most parents appreciate the helpful, regular feedback they receive, particularly through digital platforms, about how their child is learning and progressing. This helps parents to feel more able to support their child with their learning.
- The local authority family support services provide helpful workshops within the school for parents with young people who are neurodivergent. Parents learn strategies to support young people, receive guidance and advocacy on issues relating to their child's education, and develop a strong support network for each other. Positively, a few parents are being trained to deliver these workshops to other parents.
- The Parent Council works well, in partnership with staff and young people, to support the school. They engage positively in discussions around school improvement priorities, PEF planning and developing school policies. They meet with young people from the Pupil Parliament to plan fundraising events and consider projects to improve the school environment. For example, the Parent Council recently secured funding to support improvements in the school garden area.

## 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

- Almost all young people have a strong sense of belonging to the school community. They feel included and valued and that staff treat them fairly and with respect. Most recognise their peers treat them this way also. Staff demonstrate very effectively nurture principles in their daily interactions with young people. This helps most young people feel safe.
- Almost all staff demonstrate a strong understanding of their role in supporting young people's wellbeing. They know young people and their families well. Most young people demonstrate a clear understanding of the wellbeing indicators and why they are relevant to their daily lives. This helps them recognise what may impact their wellbeing and take steps either individually, or with support, to address any issues.
- Staff have introduced new systematic approaches to gathering data about young people's wellbeing. This is beginning to inform wellbeing conversations with a few young people and to plan support where required. A few young people are supported well through a discrete counselling service to help address feelings of anxiety or low mood. This helps young people well to attend school more regularly. Staff should continue to develop their tracking systems further to ensure that they use data effectively to identify universal and targeted wellbeing supports. This should also help staff to gather clear evidence of the impact of interventions.
- A majority of young people benefit from positive, relevant and progressive learning experiences in personal and social education (PSE) from S1 to S6. This is enhanced by the whole school strategy of promoting positive mental wellbeing. As a result, young people's mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing is improving. A range of partners support the delivery of PSE well, such as the fire and rescue services who teach driver safety awareness. Pupil support (PS) staff use young people's views to ensure the PSE curriculum reflects issues relevant to young people's lives. Pupil support staff should develop further young people's role in planning and reviewing PSE.
- Most staff meet their statutory duties relating to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. They demonstrate a clear commitment to 'Getting it Right for Every Child'. This helps young people feel valued and safe. Staff's commitment to meet young people's needs underpins an inclusive and supportive environment for learners. Staff benefit from high-quality professional learning relating to inclusive practice and, as a result, the majority have reviewed and adapted learning environments to enhance the universal offer of support.

- Senior leaders, PS and support for learning (SfL) staff use effectively a staged intervention model to identify young people who require support. This helps key staff, along with young people, their families and where appropriate partners, to identify and address successfully barriers to learning and wellbeing. This involves well-considered individual or group work and family support. Most young people achieve positive outcomes due to interventions. These include an improved sense of wellbeing, increased attendance and the development of important life skills. Pupil support staff should develop further their approaches to assessing the strengths and development needs of individual young people. This will help them to identify the specific outcomes sought from interventions and to measure their impact more clearly.
- Support for learning staff share high-quality comprehensive information with staff about the needs of young people. They meet with young people and parents regularly to review information and to set targets relating to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These targets are captured well in child's plans and shared appropriately with staff. A few young people would benefit from more specific and relevant targets. Class teachers should contribute more readily to evidence of young people's progress across the curriculum towards their targets.
- Staff fulfil their corporate parenting duties very well. Pupil support staff track and monitor the attainment, achievement and wellbeing of care-experienced young people effectively. All young people who are care-experienced have an adult who serves as their 'Promise Keeper', advocating for their rights and opportunities. As a result, most care-experienced young people achieve and attain positive outcomes. Pupil support staff should ensure they systematically record how all care-experienced young people are considered for a coordinated support plan. Staff provide strong support for young carers. This leads to greater recognition of young people carrying out these roles. Young people are then helped to complete their young carer statement and to access high-quality support.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. Several areas for improvement have been agreed with the school meals provider.
- Almost all young people recognise that the school helps them to respect and understand other people. Most young people and their parents believe that bullying incidents are dealt with well or indicate they have never experienced bullying. A few young people in S5 and S6 lead as MVP. These young people deliver meaningful workshops for young peers to promote gender equality and to educate their peers about sexual harassment. Young people recognise gender biases and inequality in society more clearly because of this learning.
- Young people come from diverse backgrounds, with 25 languages currently spoken across the school community. A few young people serve as diversity ambassadors. They organised a food festival, allowing young people to try dishes associated with different cultures. This helped young people to develop respect and appreciate cultural differences.

- Staff and young people are at the early stages of identifying where young people learn about diversity and inclusion across the curriculum. Currently, this is part of planned programmes in a few curricular areas, such as social subjects, RME, and expressive arts. Staff and young people should continue to develop further opportunities for young people to learn about children's rights, equality and diversity, including in relation to the protected characteristics. This should enhance further the strong sense of belonging and compassion across the school community.
- Staff ensure young people are very well supported at various points of transition in school. They provide a comprehensive transition programme for young people moving from primary to secondary school which enables almost all young people to settle well and quickly into secondary school. Staff work effectively with primary colleagues to gather a range of information to identify any support which may be required. A few young people access enhanced individualised transition support, including well-received support from a range of partners. Young people are helped effectively to plan and prepare for post-school destinations. They receive appropriate guidance and support from teachers and SDS staff to identify and apply for a range of different pathways. Almost all young people achieved a positive, sustained post-school destination over the last three years.

## 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

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

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

- Senior leaders, working with others, have developed a very clear succinct three-year raising attainment strategy. This focuses on improving attainment in literacy and numeracy, SCQF level 5 attainment in S4 and S5 and SCQF level 6 attainment in S6. The detail of actions associated with this plan are clearly exemplified within the school improvement plan. Staff are currently in the second year of implementing this strategy. There are early signs of improvements in attainment, particularly in literacy, numeracy and at S4.

### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

#### Broad General Education (BGE)

- Attainment improved in all literacy and numeracy measures across CfE third and fourth levels from 2021/22 to 2023/24. In literacy and numeracy, this improved from the majority of young people to almost all at CfE third level. At CfE fourth level attainment improved across reading, listening and talking and numeracy from around half to most. In writing, there are year on year improvements. The majority of young people attain at this level from 2021/22 to 2023/24.
- Teachers work well with colleagues in primary schools. They regularly share information and learn together. This is leading to reliable assessment information at the time of young people's transition to secondary school. As a result, young people successfully build on their prior knowledge, particularly in numeracy on entering secondary school. Professional judgements in both literacy and numeracy are increasingly reliable and robust.

### Senior Phase

#### Literacy and numeracy (leavers)

- The majority of young people who left school in 2022/23 and 2023/24 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy, generally in line with the VC. A minority of young people who left school in 2022/23 and 2023/24 achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy, in line with the VC.
- The majority of young people who left school between 2019/20 and 2023/24 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. A minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy from 2019/20 to 2023/24. This is generally in line with VC, however, was significantly higher than the VC in 2022/23.
- The majority of young people who require additional support with their learning attained literacy at SCQF level 5 or better from 2019/20 to 2023/24. Less than half attained numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better from 2021/22 to 2023/24.

- A few young people leave school with no literacy, or numeracy, qualification at SCQF level 3 in each of the last five years (from 2021/22 to 2023/24). Senior leaders have put in place measures this year to capture attainment, for identified young people, at an earlier stage.

### **Literacy (Cohorts)**

- In S4, the majority of young people attain SCQF level 5 or better in literacy from 2020/21 to 2023/24. This is generally in line with the VC. In 2024/25, this improved to most young people attaining at this level which is significantly much higher than the VC.
- By S5, as a percentage of the S5 roll, most young people attain SCQF level 5 or better in literacy from 2021/22 to 2024/25. This improved from being significantly lower than the VC in 2021/22 to being in line with the VC in 2022/23 and 2024/25. By S5, the majority of young people attain SCQF level 6 in 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2024/25 and a minority attain SCQF level 6 in 2022/23, in line with the VC. In 2023/24, the majority of young people attain SCQF level 6, significantly higher than the VC.
- By S6, as a percentage of the S6 roll, almost all young people attain SCQF level 5 or better in literacy from 2020/21 to 2024/25, in line with the VC. Most young people attain SCQF level 6 over the same time period in line with the VC from 2020/21 to 2023/24 and significantly much higher than the VC in 2024/25.

### **Numeracy (Cohorts)**

- The majority of young people attained SCQF level 5 or better from 2022/23 and 2023/24. This improved from being significantly lower than the VC in 2022/23 to most attaining at this level in 2024/25, which is now significantly higher than the VC.
- By S5, as a percentage of the S5 roll, the majority of young people attain SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy from 2021/22 to 2023/24, in line with the VC. This improves to most in the latest year, 2024/25, which is significantly higher than the VC. A minority attain SCQF level 6 or better in numeracy in 2021/22 to 2023/24. This is in line with the VC. This remains a minority of young people in 2024/25, however attainment is now significantly higher than the VC.
- By S6, as a percentage of the S6 roll, most young people attain SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy from 2022/23 and 2023/24. This is in line with the VC. Almost all attained at this level in 2024/25. In 2022/23 a majority attain SCQF level 6 or better in numeracy, significantly higher than the VC. This declined in 2023/2024 to a minority which is maintained in 2024/25. For both years this is in line with the VC.
- All teachers are at the early stages of recognising their role in developing literacy and numeracy as a responsibility of all. Helpfully, young people have access to literacy supports through the literacy toolkits available across the school. The mathematics department should continue to take forward planned actions to develop numeracy skills across the school.

### **National Qualifications**

- The percentage of young people in S4 presented for National 5 (N5) Mathematics is in line with the national average, however the percentage passing at this level is above the national average in 2024/25. By S5 and S6 the percentage of young people presented for N5 Mathematics is below the national average. The percentage passing at this level is above the national average.

- The percentage of young people in S4 presented for, and passing, N5 Applications of Mathematics in 2024/25 is above the national average. By S5 and S6, the percentage of young people presented for N5 Applications of Mathematics is in line with the national average. The percentage passing at this level is below the national average.
- The percentage of young people in S4 presented for and passing N5 English is in line with the national average in 2024/25. By S5 and S6, the percentage of young people presented for N5 English is in line with the national average. The percentage passing at this level is substantially lower than the national average in 2024/25.
- Senior leaders should continue to keep under review the number of young people presented for both applications of mathematics and mathematics, and those who are presented for National 4 and N5 in any subject.

## **Attainment over time**

### **BGE**

- Senior leaders have empowered all teachers to use data more effectively. Senior leaders implemented effectively a whole school BGE tracker. This enables staff to check for prior attainment across all faculty areas and review progress across all subjects. The tracker also informs staff about key equity information. This information is helpfully organised to reflect attainment groups used in the senior phase. Teachers use this information well to help identify groups of young people who require additional supports and to identify interventions to accelerate progress.
- Teachers track, record and report the attainment of young people throughout the BGE across curricular areas beyond literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders report that in 2024/25 almost all young people, and a minority who require additional support with their learning, attained CfE third level, in most curriculum areas outwith literacy and numeracy.
- Almost all identified young people in the BGE who are supported with targeted interventions in literacy and numeracy are accelerating their progress.

### **Senior phase**

- In the senior phase, after each assessment window, senior and middle leaders review information to ensure that timely well-considered interventions are put in place for young people. Teachers appreciate their involvement in attainment review meetings along with their principal teacher, link senior leader and headteacher. This helps teachers have a better understanding of the areas within courses that young people find more challenging. Most teachers adapt their teaching and support young people to overcome their difficulties. Young people in S5 benefit from timetabled attainment academies. Supported study sessions support young people in the senior phase. Together these evolving processes help young people be more aware of what they need to do next to improve their attainment. This leads to more young people taking more responsibility for their own learning and improving their attainment, particularly in the latest year, 2024/25.

### **Senior Phase - Leavers**

- When compared using average complementary tariff points, the attainment of leavers from 2019/20 to 2023/24 was below the VC, apart from 2022/23 when it moved to slightly above the VC.

- Average complementary tariff scores for the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% of young people is in line the VC from 2021/22 to 2023/24. Attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people improved from being significantly below the VC in 2020/21 to being in line for the following two years. Attainment of this group then declined to being significantly much lower than the VC in 2023/24.
- Attainment for the lowest attaining 20%, and middle attaining 60% of leavers who require additional support shows no consistent pattern of improvement and is broadly in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2023/24. Attainment for the highest attaining 20% of leavers who require additional support is consistently below the VC from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

### Senior phase - cohorts

- In S4, from 2022/23 to 2024/25 attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people is in line with the VC. The middle attaining 60% of young people attained in line with the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This is now significantly higher in 2024/25. From 2022/23 to 2024/25 the highest attaining 20% of young people attained broadly in line with the VC.
- By S5, based on S5, attainment of the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60%, highest attaining 20% of young people is broadly in line with the VC from 2021/22 to 2024/25.
- By S6, based on S6, the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% of young people attain in line with the VC from 2021/22 to 2024/25. Attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people is significantly much lower than the VC in the last two years, 2023/24 and 2024/25. Senior leaders should continue as planned to maximise attainment for young people in S6.

### College courses

- A high proportion of young people gain qualifications through other providers, primarily through college links. These qualifications are not recorded within the school's tariff scores. Attendance and success rates in these qualifications are very high and compare very favourably with other schools.

### Breadth and depth

- At S4, between 2020/21 and 2024/25, the majority of young people achieve three or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. This is broadly in line with the VC until 2024/25 when it was significantly higher than the VC. Attainment at SCQF level 5A or better is generally in line with the VC.
- By S5, based on S5, a majority of young people achieve four or more awards at SCQF 5C or better. This measure improved from 2022/23 when it was significantly lower than the VC to being in line with the VC in the following two years. Overall, a minority of young people achieve five or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better. This is in line with the VC and improving in 2024/25. A minority of young people achieved four or more awards at SCQF 6C or better from 2020/21 to 2024/25, broadly in line with the VC. Overall, a few achieve five or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better, in line with the VC.
- By S6, based on S6, a majority of young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better between 2020/21 and 2024/25 in line with the VC. This has declined from 2022/23 to 2024/25. A minority of young people achieved two or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better between 2023/24 and 2024/25, in line with the VC. This is significantly lower than the VC in 2024/25. A few young people attained one or more qualification at SCQF level 7C or better in

2023/24 and 2024/25. This was respectively significantly much lower and significantly lower than the VC. A few young people attain one or more qualifications at SCQF level 7A or better, in line with the VC.

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

- Overall, young people develop skills and achieve well in part because of the wide range of activities that occur during and outwith the school day, including educational excursions. Young people articulate clearly the impact of these experiences, such as increasing their confidence and independence, improved communication and teamworking. They value these opportunities, which help to develop further their creativity, critical thinking and ability to use their initiative.
- A significant minority of young people benefit from the improving range of pupil leadership and volunteering opportunities, such as MVP and paired reading. The number of young people accredited with awards to celebrate, and reward their commitment to volunteering such as Saltire, is beginning to increase. A few, and increasing number, of young people are developing well their sense of responsibility by taking part in the well-embedded Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme.
- Senior leaders work very well with partners to enrich young people's experiences and achievements. The number of young people achieving a broad range of SCQF accredited qualifications is a strength of the school. A useful range of partners help support the development of employability and career skills through a well-structured calendar of events. These include local employers, the University of the West of Scotland Foundation Academy, Focus West, The School of Creativity and Invest in Renfrewshire. This helps young people move into positive, sustained destinations.
- Senior leaders are now better able to identify young people who may be at risk of missing out from valuable experiences as they have implemented a system for tracking achievements. Senior leaders now encourage identified young people in S1 and S2 to take up opportunities for personal achievement within and outwith school. As planned, senior leaders should continue to extend the personal achievement offer across the school, with a continued focus on closing the achievement gap and developing the understanding and use of the meta-skills framework.
- Achievement is recognised and celebrated well in a variety of ways including through social media, the headteacher's weekly update and assemblies. A few faculties recognise students of the month, such as the 'humanities hero'. Whilst at an early stage, young people view the recently introduced school values awards positively. The annual award ceremony also recognises ambition and achievement, as well as attainment. As the school's achievement and leadership offer continues to grow, staff and young people should continue to reflect on how best to recognise and celebrate success.

### **Equity for all learners**

- All staff have a very strong awareness of the socio-economic context of all young people and focus relentlessly on improving their educational outcomes. They support young people and families very sensitively and effectively. For example, staff discretely offer a wide range of equipment and resources to enable young people to engage fully in the life of the school. These include support to attend educational excursions and access to a uniform or food bank as required. Young people's engagement and participation in PE lessons has improved because staff provide easy access to the required kit.

- Senior leaders use data very well to plan strategically their use of PEF. As a result of key staff appointments, they have successfully improved attendance and attainment in literacy and numeracy for identified young people.
- Senior leaders have recently developed effective systems for identifying young people at risk of not attaining as well as possible. This has resulted in staff taking steps to ensure that young people maximise their attainment prior to leaving school. A few young people who are at risk of disengaging from school access a wide range of supportive interventions and bespoke curriculum arrangements. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to track and monitor the attainment of specific groups of young people. For example, young people who are in receipt of free school meals.
- Overall, attendance is in line with the national average. Senior leaders recognise improving attendance as a school priority. Staff monitor young people's attendance systematically and work well with parents to address barriers to regular attendance. Staff support a few young people and families who struggle to maintain regular attendance at school well with, for example, targeted work to develop young people's emotional resilience. This is leading to improvements in a majority of identified young people's attendance and engagement. A few young people attend school part-time. Staff should continue to work with young people and their families with a focus on supporting young people back into full-time learning as soon as possible. Staff should ensure that arrangements for part-time learning are reviewed regularly, with outcomes and decisions recorded, to demonstrate progress being made over time.
- Almost all young people who left the school between 2022/23 and 2024/25 moved to a sustained positive destination. This is in line with the VC for those in S4 and S5. For S6 leavers as a percentage of S6, this is in line apart from in 2022/23 when this measure was significantly much lower than the VC. The majority of young people leave school to higher or further education. A minority move to employment from school while a few enter training programmes.

## Quality of provision of Special Unit

The Flexible Learning Resource (FLR) is located within Castlehead High School. Staff support young people residing in the catchment areas for Castlehead and Gleniffer High Schools. Young people attend the provision for part of their learning each week. Most young people also attend classes in their mainstream schools. At the time of the inspection, there were 30 young people accessing support from the FLR. The principal teacher, together with the newly appointed local authority virtual headteacher, has overall responsibility for the resource.

### Leadership of change

- The FLR has gone through a period of change over the past three years. Previously, the provision supported young people with language and communication needs who attended Castlehead High School. The resource now supports young people across two secondary schools and provides outreach support in young people's homes and the local community. The principal teacher has led staff very well through these recent changes. She provides effective leadership and models very positive relationships with young people, parents and carers. She is well respected by staff, young people and parents. Together with staff, she has created a learning provision where young people feel safe and nurtured. Staff across the FLR and the school are committed to inclusion. All staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and carry out these roles very effectively. Staff in the two mainstream schools share responsibility for meeting the ASN of young people. They work collegiately with staff in the FLR to plan learning, timetables and interventions.
- Across the provision, staff understand very well the learning and wellbeing needs of young people. The vision of 'meeting young people where they are at and supporting them to get where they want to be' is evident in how staff support young people's learning and wellbeing. Staff participate in relevant professional learning such as promoting positive behaviour. Staff use this professional learning well to help them engage and support young people. Relationships between young people and staff are very positive and respectful. Young people value the individual support and care they receive. Parents are positive about the impact of FLR in supporting young people to re-engage with their learning. They identify how placement in the FLR has led to positive learning experiences and successful post school destinations.
- Almost all staff have a clear focus on improving the work of the FLR. Staff participate in appropriate self-evaluation activities to identify what is working well and what needs to improve. The principal teacher supports staff effectively to identify and share positive practice. The resource improvement plan identifies accurately priorities such as developing consistent approaches to learning and teaching. As a result, young people benefit from well planned, individualised teaching approaches. As planned, the principal teacher and staff should work with the newly appointed virtual headteacher to continue to identify priorities that align to the local authority's approach to inclusion.

### Learning, teaching and assessment

- Most young people engage very well in their learning. Within the FLR, young people work individually with staff for almost all of their learning. They benefit from high levels of support and learning that is matched accurately to their individual needs. Young people behave well and are respectful to staff. Learning spaces are calm and well organised. As a result, young people are focused and are motivated to complete tasks. Young people who attend mainstream classes are well supported by both mainstream and FLR staff. Staff consider well

the individual needs of young people when planning their access to subjects in mainstream classes. A few young people require more opportunities to access a wider range of mainstream subjects.

- Lessons are well planned and take appropriate account of the needs of young people. Staff use the Castlehead Lesson Cycle effectively to plan, deliver and assess learning. As a result, lessons are well structured and challenging. Teachers make good use of questioning and higher-order thinking skills. Staff discuss with young people what they are learning and how they will achieve success. The level and pace of learning are highly appropriate to the learning and emotional needs of young people. Staff use a wide range of approaches to help young people engage in learning and regulate their emotions. This includes effective use of play pedagogies. Staff use strategies such as breaks, games and discussion to support young people to sustain concentration and engagement.
- Young people participate in learning activities appropriate to their needs outwith the school environment. These include work experience opportunities, college placements, physical fitness activities with community organisations and placements with construction industries. Young people are very positive about how these activities support them to engage in education in an alternative environment.
- The principal teacher, together with school senior leaders and FLR staff, tracks and monitors effectively young people's progress. Assessment approaches are used well and are adapted to meet the needs of young people. Staff continually review and adapt young people's learning and timetables to reflect their progress. As discussed, staff should continue to work with a minority of young people to increase their time in school and participation in learning.

### **Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion**

- Staff in the FLR are skilled in supporting and improving young people's wellbeing. They use the 'cycle of motivational behaviour change' to plan carefully young people's engagement. Staff, young people and their families work together to plan how and when learning will take place. This approach supports young people's mental and emotional wellbeing very well. It enables them to participate in learning in the FLR, mainstream school or in the community. Staff's professional learning in areas such as anxiety management enables them to support young people effectively. Young people in the FLR benefit from a safe and calm learning environment and supportive caring relationships with staff.
- A few young people have experienced significant periods of absence from education. They report that high levels of support and positive relationships with staff are allowing them to re-engage with education. A few young people who are unable to attend school for all of their learning benefit from support at home and in the community from teachers and support staff. The principal teacher and senior leaders in mainstream schools monitor appropriately young people's attendance. They engage directly with families to identify and address issues. Key workers and ASN assistants provide high-quality support for young people. They have very positive relationships with learners. They support young people to participate in activities at school and in the local community. This enables young people to build confidence, resilience and prepares them for learning in school.
- Staff work appropriately with young people to help them understand their own wellbeing strengths and needs. Young people participate in regular wellbeing surveys to help them

understand risks and what they need to do to be safe and healthy. As planned, staff should continue to identify and support specific wellbeing needs of individual young people. Staff should continue to develop tracking and monitoring approaches to enable them to use data better to measure the impact of targeted interventions for young people.

- Staff work very well with young people and families to create bespoke timetables that reflect individual needs. Staff consult effectively with young people and their parents to ensure support and interventions are matched to their needs. Young people and their families' views are well-considered in meetings and when developing individual plans. Young people are helped well to understand their own wellbeing and to set individual wellbeing targets. Staff record these to inform appropriate, detailed plans for young people. These plans are used effectively by staff to support young people.

### **Raising attainment and achievement**

- Overall, most young people make good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics.

### **Literacy**

- Young people in the BGE work within CfE second to third level. They write for a range of purposes using correct punctuation. Young people use digital technology well to present their work and display information. They read confidently and show preferences for different types of genres. Almost all young people interact well with known adults. They are beginning to form opinions and give reasons for their choices. Staff should continue to support young people to work together and develop their listening and talking skills with others. Young people in the senior phase achieve literacy at SCQF level 2 or better to SCQF level 5 or better, depending on their strengths and individual needs.

### **Numeracy**

- Young people in the BGE work within CfE second to third level. Young people use number process accurately to complete calculations. They use problem solving approaches well to decide which number processes to use. They measure lengths and breadth of items and calculate the area and perimeter of surfaces. They understand place value, money and apply their knowledge in practical situations. Young people in the senior phase achieve courses at SCQF level 2 or better to SCQF level 5 or better, depending on their strengths and individual needs. These include mathematics, numeracy and applications of mathematics.

### **Attainment over time**

- Staff in the FLR, together with senior leaders in the school, track young people's progress and attainment well. Most young people make good progress from prior levels of attainment. A few young people who have experienced periods of interrupted learning prior to attending the FLR have made significant progress in a short period of time. Almost all young people in the senior phase achieve an appropriate number of courses at SCQF level 2 or better to SCQF level 5 or better, depending on their strengths and needs. As staff widen course choices, young people could potentially achieve qualifications across a broader range of subjects.

## **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Young people's achievements are recognised and celebrated well. Staff use praise and positive language to help young people take pride in their successes. Young people are gaining valuable skills through activities such as construction, car valeting and cycle maintenance. Young people in the senior phase attend college placements through a supported college programme. They are positive about the skills and confidence they are developing and how they will use these skills beyond school.
- Young people develop skills and experience success through a range of awards and accreditations. This includes the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Personal Achievement Awards. A few young people achieve the Youth Scotland Hi5 award for setting and achieving personal goals. They work closely with key workers to identify personal goals that support their social and emotional wellbeing. Young people's confidence and resilience improves as a result of achieving these goals.

## **Equity for all learners**

- Staff in the FLR and senior leaders understand very well young people's socio-economic and wellbeing needs. They use information effectively to ensure all young people access learning appropriate to their needs. Staff are strongly committed to ensuring all young people are prepared well for leaving school. Young people participate in college placements, work experience and engage with training providers. As a result, all young people leave and move to a positive post-school destination.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

Staff led the development of The School of Creativity, coordinating a grouping of disciplines within the school. This is a formal partnership with Glasgow School of Art, aimed at encouraging the development of skills related to creativity. It has also been supported by a strong partnership with West College Scotland, and Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design (DJCAD). In addition to art-based programmes, staff have developed creativity programmes, with a good uptake throughout the school. Young people appreciate the wide range of creative skills, and many of them have chosen a creative career in areas such as art, design, photography. Staff from DJCAD have used Castlehead High School as a base to offer professional learning to school staff across central Scotland.

# 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.