

Summarised inspection findings

Our Lady and St Patrick's High School

West Dunbartonshire Council

31 March 2026

Key contextual information

School Name: Our Lady and St Patrick's High School

Council: West Dunbartonshire

SEED number: 8304238

Roll (January 2026): 963

Our Lady and St Patrick's High School is a denominational, comprehensive secondary school. The school serves the catchment area of Alexandria, Balloch, Dumbarton, Helensburgh and the Catholic population which extends along the coastline to Rosneath.

The headteacher has been in post for 12 years. He is supported by five depute head teachers, four of whom are substantive.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average and is increasing.

Exclusions are generally in line with the national average and are decreasing.

In September 2024, 17.9% of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2024, 35.3% of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2025, the school reported that 46% of pupils had additional support needs.

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

- Staff have developed a highly positive ethos at Our Lady and St Patrick's (OLSP) High School, aligned to the school vision of Uniter Deo "One with God" and the Gospel values. Young people and teachers interact well with each other. This helps to maintain a positive and calm learning environment where young people feel nurtured and respected. Young people benefit from very positive, supportive relationships with staff, which contributes to their strong sense of belonging and pride in their school community. Young people across the school behave very well and show respect and kindness towards each other.
- Across all stages, almost all young people participate well in planned learning activities. They enjoy learning when they can take part in paired and group work. In a few instances, when given the opportunity to lead aspects of their learning, young people have increased motivation and focus. All staff should now consider how to incorporate a wider range of varied and creative pedagogical approaches to classroom activities.
- In almost all classes, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. The majority of teachers recap prior learning through a variety of well-planned starter activities. In most lessons teachers use a consistent approach to share the purpose of learning and how young people can be successful. In the most effective lessons, this is supporting young people to understand what they need to do and how to measure their progress. In a minority of lessons, this approach is beginning to support young people's understanding of meta-skills. Teachers recognise the need to improve the quality of success criteria as these too often focus on the completion of tasks. Teachers should now look at developing the quality of learning intentions and success criteria so that all young people understand what successful learning looks like.
- Most teachers use questioning well to promote recall and to check for understanding. In a few classes, questioning is beginning to build curiosity and confidence in young people and support the development of higher-order thinking skills. All teachers should further develop and extend the use of open ended questions to challenge thinking.
- Most staff have an understanding of the needs of individual young people from the well developed pupil information booklet, and information shared by the wider support team. However, in the majority of lessons, learning activities do not always meet all young people's needs. In these lessons, young people too often carry out the same task at the same pace, directed by the teacher. This results in a few young people not being fully engaged with their learning. In a minority of lessons, learning moves forward at an appropriate pace and supports learner engagement. In the most effective lessons, staff use a variety of strategies

to support individual learners sensitively and creatively. Senior leaders need to consider how best to monitor and evaluate the impact of information to support learning needs to ensure that this is being used to best support the planning of appropriately challenging and well-paced activities that meet the needs of all young people.

- The OLSP lesson structure has been effectively implemented in all subject areas and is being used by middle leaders to develop a more consistent approach to classroom observations. The Teaching Learning Classroom (TLC) group supports improvement in the consistency and routines of learning. Almost all staff have engaged in the work of the TLC and speak confidently about the range of professional learning and the positive impact this is having on their individual and departmental capacity for improvement. Senior Leaders should now develop the OLSP toolkit further, in collaboration with all key stakeholders, to better support improvements in learning, teaching and assessment.
- Senior leaders now need to work with all staff to develop further the whole school, shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. An important next step to support this work is the planned development of a whole school strategic approach to quality assurance of learning, teaching and assessment. This will ensure consistency and support improved outcomes for young people across the school.
- Almost all teachers use digital platforms effectively to support revision in class and learning at home. Young people speak positively about lessons where digital technology is used to enhance learning and teaching. Digital technology is used well to support targeted groups of young people. As a next step, teachers should expand these opportunities further across more aspects of young people's learning.
- Young people learn through a range of well-planned opportunities beyond the classroom. These include learning in the outdoors and contributing to the wider life of the school. Young people in S6 provide support for younger peers, acting as positive role models. They help meet the needs of individual learners through one-to-one and small group support. Young people understand how these experiences help them to make connections in their learning, while developing knowledge and skills for life, learning and work.
- All teachers plan learning appropriately in the broad general education (BGE) using Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. In a few departments, staff have carefully mapped their learning intentions and success criteria to the experiences and outcomes in course plans.
- The majority of teachers incorporate effectively the use of meta-skills within their lessons. Young people are beginning to articulate the skills they are developing. Middle and senior leaders should continue with their plans to develop further a whole school approach to tracking the use and application of meta-skills.
- Almost all teachers provide valuable and supportive feedback to young people across the BGE and senior phase through effective learner conversations, profiles and evaluation sheets. This is supporting young people well to understand their next steps in learning. Young people speak confidently about their levels and how this feedback motivates them to learn

and stay focused. They value the feedback and individual conversations they have with their teachers.

- Most teachers use a variety of assessment approaches effectively in the BGE and senior phase to support young people to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. In the BGE, most teachers are becoming increasingly confident in using a range of assessment evidence to inform their judgments of achievement of a CfE level. In the BGE, most departments are carrying out internal moderation activities which are building confidence in assessment judgements. Senior leaders should continue to support staff to engage in well-planned, robust moderation activities, across and beyond the school. This will help to improve further the reliability of assessment judgements in the BGE and support teachers to plan approaches to learning more effectively.
- Almost all teachers are confident when making summative assessment judgements in the senior phase. They use strong verification procedures to ensure they are making sound judgements. Staff across all curricular areas are Scottish Qualifications Authority appointees. They support colleagues' understanding of national standards. Curriculum leaders also speak positively about the support given through their curricular subject networks. This is allowing curriculum leaders to share good practice and resources and learn from others.
- In both the BGE and senior phase, departments have developed effective tracking approaches to record, monitor and track young people's progress. This allows class teachers to assess and monitor the progress being made by all young people and plan appropriate interventions. In the majority of subjects in the BGE and senior phase, young people have the opportunity to record and track their own progress using a variety of departmental approaches. This is supporting most young people in the senior phase and the majority of young people in the BGE to speak confidently about their strengths and next steps in learning. In the most effective examples, class teachers and middle leaders use this data to plan and support improvements in learning. Senior and middle leaders need to consider how best to share the most effective practice to ensure a more consistent approach to planning using departmental tracking.

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, children. 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

good

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

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

BGE

- In 2023/24, by the end of S3, most young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level in literacy and numeracy. This shows an increase since 2021/22. In 2023/24, a minority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy and numeracy. This is considerably below local and national measures. However, this does not limit young people's progress to national qualifications.
- Senior leaders recognise the need to support staff to build confidence in judging achievement of a level in literacy and numeracy, particularly at fourth level. They should, as planned, carry out further work on refining how they record progress at fourth level in the BGE. This will enable better reflection of the positive attainment at BGE to senior phase transitions.
- By the end of S3, most young people who require additional support with their learning achieved CfE third level in literacy and numeracy. A minority of young people with additional support needs achieved CfE fourth level.

Senior phase

Currently, young people tend to achieve awards in literacy and numeracy through course awards only. Senior leaders recognise the need to ensure that all young people achieve the highest possible level of literacy and numeracy on leaving school. They should continue with plans to track more closely the progress of all young people and provide appropriate opportunities to achieve awards in literacy and numeracy, in addition to course awards.

Literacy

Leavers

- From 2020/21 to 2023/24, most young people who left school achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better in literacy. This is in line with the virtual comparator (VC) in 2023/24, having been significantly below for 2019/20, 2021/22 and 2022/23. In 2023/24, the majority of young people who left school achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy, in line with the VC and an increase since 2022/23, when a minority achieved this level.

ASN

- From 2020/21 to 2023/24, the majority of young people who require additional support with their learning left school with SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. From 2019/20 to 2023/24, a minority of young people left school with SCQF level 6 in literacy.

Cohorts

- In 2024/25, in S4, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. The percentage of young people achieving SCQF level 5 or better in literacy has been significantly lower than the VC for four out of the five years between 2020/21 and 2024/25.
- By S5, based on the S4 roll, from 2022/23 to 2024/25, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. In 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy. Performance has been sustained in line with the VC since 2021/22.
- By S6, based on the S4 roll, from 2020/21 to 2024/25, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy, in line with the VC and showing a three-year pattern of improvement. In 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy. This is in line with the VC since 2022/23.

Numeracy

Leavers

- From 2019/20 to 2023/24, the majority of young people who left school achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. This is significantly lower or much lower than the VC, having been significantly much lower in four out of these five years. In the same period, a minority of young people who left school achieved SCQF level 6 or better in numeracy, in line with the VC for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Cohorts

- In S4, in 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, significantly lower than the VC, having previously been in line with the VC since 2020/21.
- By S5, based on the S4 roll, from 2021/22 to 2024/25, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, significantly lower than the VC from 2021/22. Over the same period, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This has been in line with VC since 2023/24, having been significantly higher than the VC in 2022/23.
- By S6, based on the S4 roll, from 2020/21 to 2024/25, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. This has been significantly lower than the VC since 2022/23. From 2020/21 to 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This has been in line with the VC from 2022/23 to 2024/25.

ASN

- From 2019/20 to 2023/24, a minority of young people with additional support needs left school with SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. From 2020/21 to 2023/24, a minority of young people left school with SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This is the highest attainment in five years and shows a four-year pattern of improvement.

National Qualifications

- In 2024/25, the percentage of young people presented for Higher English and Higher Mathematics were in line with the national average. Most young people achieved grade A to C in Higher English, and in Higher Mathematics. The percentage of young people presented for National 5 (N5) English, N5 Mathematics in S4 and N5 Applications of Mathematics in S5 was below the national average. Almost all young people achieved a grade A to C at N5 English and most achieved grade A to C at N5 Mathematics, above the national average. A minority of young people achieved a grade A to C in N5 Applications of Mathematics, in line with the national average. No young people were presented for both N4 and N5 mathematics in the same year.
- Senior leaders should proceed with plans to increase presentations at N5 in English, mathematics and applications of mathematics.

Attendance

- Attendance is tracked and monitored regularly, and a range of supports are put in place for identified young people. These include individual support for young people and families from appointed staff and part-time timetables. As a result, attendance has increased steadily over the last four years.

Attainment over time

BGE

Senior leaders provided data which showed the majority of young people achieved CfE third level in the majority of curricular areas by the end of third year. A minority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in the majority of curricular areas.

Senior Phase

- Middle leaders contribute to and use effectively the whole school monitoring and tracking system. Tracking and monitoring data is collected centrally to provide senior and middle leaders with a strategic overview of the progress being made by young people. Senior leaders analyse tracking data carefully and have identified areas where they can raise attainment. These include supporting young people to complete courses and increase their aspirations, and broadening the curriculum to provide more opportunities to achieve at SCQF levels 5 and 6. Targeted interventions at whole school, departmental and class teacher level are put in place to support young people. The school has developed an effective and extensive range of interventions to support young people who are off track in their learning. This is improving outcomes for identified young people.

Leavers

- When compared using average complementary tariff scores, young people who left school between 2019/20 to 2023/24 generally attained in line with the VC. Attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of leavers in 2023/24 has improved to be in line with the VC, having previously

been significantly below the VC. In 2022/23 and 2023/24, the attainment of the middle 60% attaining young people was in line with the VC. Although there is a four-year pattern of decline for the middle attaining 60% of young people, attainment has been in line with the VC since 2022/23. From 2019/20 to 2023/24, the attainment of the highest 20% attaining young people was in line with the VC.

ASN

- When compared using average complementary tariff scores, young people who required additional support with their learning, leaving school between 2019/20 to 2023/24, attain broadly in line with the VC. Attainment for those attaining in the lowest 20%, middle 60%, and highest 20% is in line with the VC.

Cohorts

- From 2020/21 to 2024/25, when compared using average complementary tariff points, the attainment of young people in S4 is generally in line with the VC. In 2024/25, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% is in line with the VC. This shows a steady decline since 2022/23. In 2024/25, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% is in line with the VC. This has fallen from 2023/24 when attainment was significantly higher than the VC. The school's tracking data indicates a positive improvement in the attainment of young people in S4 in the current session.
- In S5, based on the S4 roll, from 2020/21 to 2024/25, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% and the middle attaining 60% is broadly in line with the VC. In 2024/25, the attainment of the highest attaining 20% is in line with the VC having been significantly higher than the VC in 2022/23.
- By S6, based on the S4 roll, from 2022/23 to 2024/25, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% is broadly in line with the VC.

Breadth and Depth

- In S4, in 2024/25, the majority of young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 5C, and a minority achieved five or more to seven or more awards, in line with the VC. In 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved one or more or three or more awards at SCQF level 5A, in line with the VC, having previously been significantly higher than the VC in 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2023/24. A few young people achieved five or more to eight or more awards at SCQF level 5A, in line with the VC.
- By S5, from 2020/21 to 2024/25, the majority of young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better, significantly higher than the VC for four of the last five years. In 2024/25, a minority achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 5A, significantly higher than the VC. From 2022/23 to 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved five or more awards at level 5A or better, in line with the VC. From 2021/22 to 2024/25, the majority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better. This was significantly higher than the VC in three of the last five years. From 2021/22 to 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better, in line with the VC. In 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better, in line with the VC.
- By S6, a minority of young people achieved three or more or five or more awards at SCQF level 5A. This is in line with the VC, having fallen from being significantly higher than the VC. A

majority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better, in line with the VC, having previously been significantly higher than the VC in 2021/22 and 2023/24. In 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved one or more to three or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better, in line with the VC. From 2022/23 to 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better, in line with the VC.

- By S5 and S6 young people gain a few awards beyond NQs and skills for work courses. These are adding value for a few young people through this increased range of pathways. For example, a few young people gain awards at SCQF level 7 Scottish Football Association refereeing and SCQF level 6 Young Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Leaders. Senior leaders should, as planned, work with staff and all key stakeholders to expand further curricular pathways for all young people. This should include a review of the curriculum with consideration of the range of courses available on the SCQF framework. This may include working closely with partners such as colleges and external providers.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people are developing skills, confidence and motivation through participating in a range of achievement activities. Across the school, a minority of young people develop skills and gain accreditation through awards. These awards include, for example, dance leadership and the majority of young people in S6 who gain the Caritas award. A few young people achieve success through the well-established Duke of Edinburgh's Awards at bronze and silver level, and this is increasing steadily.
- A wide range of clubs and activities are available for young people to participate in during the school day. These include, for example, football teams, music concerts, role playing games, and debating. Young people report that they particularly enjoy opportunities provided through music and sports, including the junior choir, guitar club, dance club and basketball. These activities support young people to develop a range of skills including communication, teamwork, confidence building and problem solving. The school do not yet have effective systems to capture and recognise the achievements of young people outwith the school. Senior leaders and staff should now support all young people to maintain a profile of their achievements, recognising and reflecting on their successes as they progress through the school and beyond. They should particularly focus on how best to support young people who do not participate in any activity and encourage them to take part. This should be part of a more strategic approach to developing skills and leadership capacities through wider achievement.
- Senior leaders and staff celebrate achievements well, primarily through social media and a range of department initiatives. In addition, a reintroduced senior awards evening celebrates success for young people in national examinations alongside significant achievements. Young people in S3 are recognised in their success on completion of the BGE.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders support young people very well in reducing barriers to learning associated with poverty. In four out of the last five years, the school's attainment for leavers in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 and 2 was in line with the national average, when compared using average complementary tariff scores.

- Staff across the school make very effective use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to support learners. The well considered, sensitive and targeted approaches outlined in the school's detailed PEF plan, show clear signs of supporting families and help to close the poverty related attainment gap. Senior leaders used robust data to identify attendance and attainment gaps for a significant group of young people. There was also a clear focus on ensuring that care experienced young people and young carers also received support through interventions for equity.
- Families receive support from the pupil and family support workers who develop strong relationships between the school and families. Targeted support for young people, particularly in literacy and numeracy, is contributing to closing the poverty-related attainment gap. There are a number of young people for whom persistent low attendance is a barrier to attainment. Through the work of the wider support team, all staff and key partners, there is a relentless focus on improving the attendance of the most disadvantaged young people. Maximising their attendance, attainment and achievement and improving their engagement with school is a key area of focus to ensure positive outcomes for this most disadvantaged group. As a next step, senior leaders should involve young people, parents, partners and all staff in decision making around PEF planning. This will ensure that all members of the school community feel involved in this aspect of school life.
- Young people recognise and value the approaches that staff take to ensure equity in school. They appreciate how nurturing and caring staff are in their interactions with them. All staff have undertaken nurture training as part of their professional learning programme to ensure that every young person is considered and provided with an equitable, consistent and supportive experience.
- Further interventions include a well-attended breakfast club, which offers young people a safe, supportive start to their day. This helps foster positive relationships with peers and staff. A well-stocked clothing bank swap shop and availability of PE kit also supports the attendance and wellbeing of young people. These universal offers have supported improved attendance and attainment and achievement for young people. These interventions, alongside a number of free trips and events, contribute to reducing the cost of the school day for young people and their families. Senior leaders should now carefully monitor those who use these provisions to ensure that those young people who are most in need are directed to use them.

Destinations

- From 2019/20 to 2023/24, almost all young people moved on to a positive destination, in line with the VC since 2021/22. A majority of young people go to higher or further education on leaving school.

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.
- The school library is valued highly and used well by staff and young people. It provides a wide range of appropriate activities to support reading and literacy. English classes are timetabled to visit the library regularly and young people enjoy borrowing books to read in class and at home. Young people read, study and socialise in the library at break and lunchtimes.
- Young people receive their full entitlement to religious and moral education from S1-6 and religious observance in line with national guidance. Young people experience their entitlement to high quality physical education.
- Young people from S1 to S3 receive their entitlement to modern language learning in French and Italian as part of the Language Learning in Scotland 1+2 approach.

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.