HMIE | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Summarised inspection findings

Brechin High School

Angus Council

24 November 2026

Key contextual information

School Name:	Brechin High School
Council:	Angus Council
SEED number:	5307236
Roll (October 2026):	529 young people

Brechin High School is a non-denominational secondary school serving the town of Brechin and the surrounding rural areas. The headteacher has been in post since April 2023 and is supported by four depute headteachers, two in acting posts, as well as a school business manager.

In September 2025, 15.4% of young people were registered for free school meals.

In September 2025, 19.8% of young people lived in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles two to three. Around half of young people lived in SIMD deciles four to six and around a third lived in SIMD deciles seven to nine. In September 2025, the school reported that 48% of young people had additional support needs, in line with national averages.

In 2025, 29.6% of young people left school at the end of S4, which is higher than national averages of 14.2%.

The school includes four learning hubs: the enhanced hub, the attainment hub, the junior hub and the senior hub. Young people access targeted support in the hubs to meet a range of learning and wellbeing needs. The hubs are accessed by around a fifth of young people across the school. A few young people access these mainstream provisions on a full time basis.

The school has experienced challenges in relation to staffing, including staff absences and recruitment over recent years. This has been improving over the last and current sessions.

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2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory

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

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

- Almost all relationships between staff and young people, and between young people, are mutually respectful. Senior leaders work positively with staff to ensure young people benefit from a calm and purposeful learning environment. Almost all staff and young people demonstrate the school values effectively in daily interactions. Most young people are well-mannered, eager to learn and demonstrate pride in their school and local community.

- Most young people behave well in classes. A majority of teachers should now develop how they stimulate young people's sustained motivation for, and engagement in, learning. In a majority of lessons, activities are overly teacher led with young people completing the same task at the same pace. A minority of teachers use low level tasks too often, such as completing worksheets, which do not accelerate young people's progress in learning sufficiently. All young people need more opportunities to lead aspects of learning and to engage in rich, challenging tasks.

- Senior leaders prioritise well the development and improvement of learning, teaching and assessment as a key area of school improvement. Progress in this area is evidenced clearly through the school improvement plan and monitoring processes. Senior and middle leaders have led the development of the 'Brechin Framework for Learning' ably. Staff use this document effectively to outline shared expectations of learning and teaching, including agreed practice that should happen in every lesson. Staff benefit from well-considered professional learning in relation to teaching approaches and now use agreed lesson protocols routinely. As a result, young people experience increasingly consistent classroom routines which reinforce clear expectations of both staff and young people during learning. Staff should build on this positive start by learning from consistently high-quality practice adopted in a few departments across the school. They should embed the practice that is having the greatest impact on learners.

- Almost all teachers share the purpose of learning routinely and most detail the measures of success for young people. This helps young people to understand the relevance of their learning. A minority of teachers regularly revisit measures of success during lessons and review progress meaningfully at the end of learning. Most teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. Positively, almost all teachers use helpful daily reviews as starter tasks to engage young people with new aspects of learning. A minority of teachers pace these activities skilfully. This moves the learning forward swiftly whilst ensuring young people make links between new and prior learning.

- Most teachers know young people well as individuals and demonstrate an awareness of those who require additional support with their learning. However, only a minority of teachers use this

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information to plan learning appropriately to meet their needs. Most teachers have accessed professional learning to help them audit and adjust classrooms to ensure they are more inclusive of the needs of all. As an important next step, senior and middle leaders should continue to improve staff's ability to meet the needs of learners within the classroom. This should help to support a reduction in the number of young people accessing learning in hubs.

- Almost all teachers use questioning consistently to check learners' understanding or to help to recall prior learning. A few teachers use questioning effectively to support young people to think deeply about their learning, helping them to engage in more complex and reflective thinking. Senior and middle leaders should develop teachers' ability to use a range of questioning techniques to develop young people's higher-order thinking skills.

- Almost all young people benefit from an individual digital device which they use to access learning resources both in school and at home. Most young people use devices for individual research and to submit work to teachers. There are positive examples of a few teachers using digital technology creatively to provide high-quality feedback to young people, to differentiate tasks allocated to classes effectively and to provide highly engaging learning experiences. This practice needs to be developed further to ensure digital technology supports improved outcomes for all young people.

- Senior leaders identified correctly the need to improve teacher's approaches to planning learning in S1 – S3. Most teachers are using the recently introduced broad general education (BGE) planning tool well. They plan learning using experiences and outcomes and record the skills young people develop through learning. This is helping most teachers to understand better the importance of assessment in the planning and delivery of learning and teaching. Teachers should continue to develop their ability to plan learning robustly. This will help them as they prepare to implement the Curriculum Improvement Cycle.

- Most teachers use an appropriate range of formative and summative assessments routinely. This includes exam style tests, use of show me boards, and a few examples of peer- and self-assessment. A few teachers adapt learning effectively based on information gathered from formative assessment. Most teachers require further professional learning relating to adaptive teaching approaches. Most teachers use outcomes from summative assessments well to inform their judgements of progress. Senior leaders should support teachers to use evidence from formative assessments more confidently to allow a holistic judgement of progress and attainment.

- Almost all teachers engage in helpful verification activities to support consistent marking of assessments. Staff in most departments undertake Qualification Scotland duties, and a majority of teachers participate in professional learning and authority network events relating to understanding standards. As a result, most teachers have a sound understanding of assessment standards for National Qualifications. Staff would benefit from more well-planned moderation activities in school, the local authority and beyond, with a focus on the BGE.

- Most young people receive regular, appropriate verbal feedback. A majority of young people would benefit from more individualised feedback to understand what they need to do to progress. Most staff have regular learner conversations with young people. This is more developed in the senior phase than in the BGE. A few teachers use these conversations meaningfully to identify measurable targets that will support young people's progress in

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learning. However, approaches to learning conversations, including how they are recorded and how progress is measured over time, are inconsistent. A majority of teachers should develop their approaches to learning conversations further to ensure they help young people to understand their next steps in learning and how to achieve them.

- Teachers in most departments use appropriate systems to monitor and track young people's progress. Middle leaders use departmental systems to maintain an overview of learner progress. They should continue to work with teachers to help them to develop further their meaningful use of data to inform their subsequent planning of learning, teaching and assessment. Senior leaders should continue to work with staff to develop further the interventions used at all levels to support young people who are off track in their learning. Middle leaders and teachers should develop robust approaches to supporting young people to progress in their learning through well-considered classroom interventions and support.

- Young people in S1 – S2 learn French and Spanish in line with national expectations. Senior leaders should review their approach in S3 to ensure it aligns fully with national guidance.

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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.

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3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	satisfactory

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 their school. The headteacher has established successfully a sense of community valued by staff, young people, parents and partners. This helps most young people to feel safe and to recognise that they have a trusted adult in school. The vision 'Proud to be Brechin' is demonstrated in all aspects of school life.

- A majority of young people are developing well their understanding of the wellbeing indicators and their relevance to their daily lives. All young people would benefit from teachers using the indicators regularly as a shared language of wellbeing across the school. A majority of young people complete wellbeing webs to self-reflect but would benefit from setting more explicit targets to improve their sense of wellbeing. Principal teachers of Pupil Care and Support (PT PCS) are at the early stages of gathering data about young people's wellbeing. They should now analyse the data gathered and use it to inform universal and targeted wellbeing supports. These approaches should help staff to gather evidence of the outcomes of support over time.

- Young people learn about the importance of living healthy and active lives in physical education and home economics. Most talk positively about the range of opportunities for achievement provided by clubs offered through and beyond the school day. A few young people adopt leadership roles relating to wellbeing, including leading clubs and acting as buddies. Young people enjoy earning house points for demonstrating school values, as well as competing in a range of interhouse competitions. This strengthens their participation in all aspects of school. Staff should develop further opportunities for young people to adopt leadership roles in relation to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Most young people can contribute more to the development and implementation of improvements in this area.

- Senior leaders and staff have developed a package of learning to support young people's wellbeing and inclusion. This includes 'us time' in S1 and S2, and personal and social education (PSE) and daily check in time for all. There is evidence that these approaches are increasingly helping young people feel ready to learn. Senior leaders now need to develop a clear rationale for the approach and ensure learning is of a sufficiently high quality. A range of partners support the delivery of PSE well, including guest speakers. Whilst PT PCS seek learner feedback on PSE and adapt it based on school or community issues, young people should be more directly involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning. This should help to ensure learning is progressive and responsive to issues which are relevant to all young people.

- There have been several changes in staffing and leadership relating to pastoral care and support for learning. Senior leaders are working well with staff to improve policies and

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procedures designed to meet statutory duties relating to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. They should continue this work to ensure all practice reflects legislation and national guidance fully. Senior leaders and staff should improve their approaches to record keeping, particularly chronologies, to reflect national expectations. They should ensure young people who are care experienced are considered for a Coordinated Support Plan and that this is recorded.

- A minority of young people who require additional support access help through learning hubs. There is evidence that these provisions support a few young people to improve their attendance and attainment. However, senior leaders need to clarify the purpose, entry criteria and pathways for each provision. This will help to ensure young people access the most appropriate level of support at the right time. Senior leaders need to review and decrease the number of young people accessing support in hubs. Most teachers need to improve their universal and targeted support so that learner needs are met better in the classroom.

- Support staff identify and plan targeted interventions to address individual barriers to learning. These support improvements in, for example, young people's engagement, literacy skills and wellbeing. As a next step, support staff should work together to develop consistently strong practice in the use of child's plans. This includes ensuring all plans demonstrate staff's assessment of a young person's strengths and development needs and includes specific and measurable targets linked to wellbeing or learning. This will strengthen staff's ability to evaluate progress, demonstrate impact and adapt support as required. All pupil profiles should provide detailed, actionable strategies to help staff respond to young people's needs.

- Senior leaders identify rightly the need to continue to improve attendance. Staff should continue to develop their strategy to improve attendance as a key driver of raised attainment and positive wellbeing outcomes. The school's exclusion rate has been above national averages in recent years. Senior leaders recognise the need to develop a strategy to reduce the use of exclusions. This will help to ensure all young people feel included in school.

- Staff have developed well-considered support for young people who are care experienced. They track their attendance, engagement and attainment to drive positive outcomes. They provide learning that develops young people's life skills and provides additional accreditation. Staff advocate on behalf of young carers, seeking to address and support any barriers to young people's engagement or progress. A few young people engaged positively with the Children's Commissioner and Scottish Parliament, advocating on the rights of young carers. Staff should continue to work with local authority partners to ensure all young carers benefit from a statement that summarises their needs and goals.

- An extensive range of partners work effectively with a few young people to provide well-considered wellbeing support. This has supported improved attendance and enhanced self-esteem and confidence for those participating. A few partners provide all young people with access to support, activities and advice in areas such as careers and employment, sporting activities and community engagement. A majority of young people develop interpersonal skills, community values and plan effectively for the future as a result of this support.

- A minority of young people and parents do not believe bullying incidents are currently addressed well by staff. Senior leaders made improvements to the anti-bullying policy recently but should build on this work to ensure it reflects national guidance fully. Staff should ensure all

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bullying and conflict incidents are recorded systematically. They should offer more opportunities for young people to contribute directly to the anti-bullying policy and procedures.

- The librarian works very well with a few young people to create a vibrant and inclusive library. All young people have access to the library providing a nurturing space and access to a wide variety of resources. The librarian ensures young people are provided with a range of texts that explore diversity, equality and inclusion, covering aspects such as neurodiversity and cultural differences. A few young people act as reading ambassadors and raise awareness of issues of inclusion effectively through podcasts, wall displays and themed days.

- Staff in a few departments include meaningful learning on diversity and discrimination as part of their curriculum. A significant minority of young people would benefit from more opportunities to understand better issues of equality. Staff and young people should develop more structured learning for young people about children's rights and the protected characteristics. This will help young people to make links with the concepts of dignity and respect across their learning.

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Other relevant evidence

- Attendance is generally below the national average. Overall attendance for academic sessions 2025/26 was 85.9%. This is below the national average. Attendance has steadily increased by 4.3% over a three-year period. A significant minority of young people are persistently absent with attendance below 90%.

- Staff are monitoring young people's attendance more systematically and are working well with parents and partners to address barriers to regular attendance. Senior leaders and PT PCS are promoting the importance of regular attendance as a driver of positive attainment through assemblies and PSE. They are providing young people with their individual attendance data to set targets and to encourage improvements. An engagement worker is supporting a few young people with low attendance to improve their engagement with school. A few young people access school on a part-time basis. Staff should continue to work with young people and families with a focus on supporting young people back to full-time learning as soon as possible. They should ensure that arrangements for part-time learning are reviewed regularly, with outcomes and decisions recorded, to demonstrate progress over time. The school's exclusion rate has been above national averages in recent years. They must ensure the use of exclusion aligns with national guidance, including the removal of informal, non-recorded exclusions.

- Senior leaders identify the need to continue to improve the quality of passes of young people in National Qualifications. They should continue to focus on developing a strong culture of aspiration and challenge across the school to help to support raised attainment of all young people.

- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the 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. 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. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with education and the catering service.

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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.

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