

Summarised inspection findings

Dalbeattie High School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

3 March 2026

Key contextual information

School Name: Dalbeattie High School

Council: Dumfries and Galloway

SEED number: 5918138

Roll: 304

Dalbeattie High School is a secondary school serving the town and wider locale of Dalbeattie in southwest Scotland. In September 2024, 12% of young people were in receipt of free school meals and all young people lived in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) zones four to nine.

Attendance is generally above the national average and has been increasing over the last few sessions. Exclusions are in line with the national average.

The headteacher has been in post since 2022. He is supported by two deputy headteachers who have been appointed on a permanent basis over the past two sessions. The middle leadership team has been restructured to now consist of four faculties. The new faculty leaders have been in post since August 2025.

In September 2025, the school reported that 44% of young people had additional support needs.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Senior leaders and staff use the well-embedded motto of 'aim high and hold the aim' to underpin the direction of change. Almost all staff use the regularly reviewed vision and values well to inform their work and interactions. Staff ensure that the values of respect, responsibility, resilience and relationships are prominent. They are referenced regularly in classes and across the school. They use the values thoughtfully to encourage young people to be active participants and valued members of the school. As a result, there is a very strong sense of community and a highly inclusive ethos across the school. Young people are very proud of their school and welcoming to visitors.
- The headteacher is very highly regarded across the school community. He knows the school well and strives to improve young people's experiences. He provides highly motivating leadership, creating a strong climate for change. The headteacher is refining school improvement and self-evaluation processes to clarify the direction of change to young people, staff and parents. Almost all staff agree that planned change is clear, connected and manageable. The headteacher has led effectively a recent restructure of middle leadership. Senior and middle leaders demonstrate that their leadership is improving young people's curriculum offer, learning experiences and attainment. They should continue to embed changes and develop their strategic leadership to demonstrate greater impact on improving young people's outcomes.
- Senior leaders gather consistently the views of young people, staff and parents to identify ongoing improvement priorities. Senior leaders and staff have improved significantly the range of methods used to capture young people's views. These include regular surveys and a well-planned programme of focus groups which provide all young people with the opportunity to offer their views. Staff are improving how these views influence change across the school. As a result, most young people agree that their views are important to staff. A majority of parents recognise that they have regular opportunities to offer their views. Senior leaders seek staff input through a well-planned programme of meetings and evaluation activities.
- Senior leaders are refining effectively the school improvement planning process. They are increasingly using a wide range of self-evaluation evidence to identify broad, overarching priorities. These reflect local and national priorities and are understood well across the school.

Middle leaders align their faculty improvement plans well to the whole school strategy. Senior and middle leaders acknowledge the need to continue to streamline further their improvement planning processes. In doing so, they should ensure all priorities are included on improvement plans and that these are specific and measurable.

- Senior leaders are developing successfully a culture of distributed leadership at all levels. Young people, mostly in the senior phase, lead through a range of roles such as senior representatives, captains, committee chairs, buddies, mentors, the pupil council and sports leaders. Through these roles, young people provide well-received support to peers. A few of these roles are aligned well to achieving school improvement priorities. This includes, for example, the pupil council, who are improving feedback to young people about how their views are used to influence change. Staff recognise the need to offer a greater range of opportunities for young people to lead change, especially in S1-3.
- Staff display high levels of engagement in leading change across the school. Most staff feel encouraged and empowered to lead school improvement. They are enthused by their leadership in a range of areas. These include meta-skills, inclusive practice, pupil voice, outdoor learning and digital technology. Through these roles, staff are improving young people's skills, achievement opportunities and post-school destinations. Staff are also developing successfully a strong culture of collegiality.
- Senior leaders and staff have developed effective processes to improve learning, teaching and assessment across the school. They have created a clear and research-informed learning and teaching policy. Staff are using this effectively to improve how they structure young people's learning experiences. This policy is aligned well to staff's professional review and development as well as faculty and whole school quality assurance activities. Almost all staff value how these processes align well to provide them with high-quality professional learning experiences. This includes, for example, all staff being involved in teacher learning communities. Staff can demonstrate how their involvement in these groups is improving their practice.
- Senior leaders are introducing more effective approaches to measure the impact of change. They have strengthened how the standards and quality report reviews improvements. This report generally details the school improvement journey over the past few sessions. Senior leaders acknowledge that embedding a culture of self-evaluation to review progress is a developing approach across the school. They should build on sharing highly effective practice evident in a few subject areas more widely across faculties. An important next step is for senior leaders to support all staff to use a wide range of robust evidence to evaluate the impact of improvement actions.
- Senior leaders plan effectively their allocation of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). This is used to fund staffing posts to support young people who may experience socio-economic disadvantage. Staff employed through this resource support young people effectively to improve their attendance and engagement. Staff demonstrate a well-developed understanding of young people's circumstances and are focusing on reducing the cost of the

school day. They provide young people with resources, uniform, support for excursions and a breakfast provision to reduce barriers to participation in school.

- Staff have a sound understanding of the social and economic context of the school community. They display a strong understanding of how the priorities for Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) enhance young people's skills for learning, life and work. Senior leaders, along with staff who have responsibility for DYW, have implemented an impactful strategy which ensures young people develop the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions about their future. Senior leaders work closely with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to plan and review the strategic priorities within the School Partnership Agreement (SPA). They monitor carefully progress with key priorities and take effective action to ensure this is successful. These approaches are resulting in the effective delivery of Career Information Advice and guidance services throughout the school. Staff are developing their knowledge of Career Education and Management Skills through impactful professional learning from SDS. Staff should work with partners more effectively to review the impact of all partnership working on improving young people's wellbeing, curriculum and attainment.

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 foster very positive, trustful relationships with young people. Staff and young people model the school values consistently in their daily interactions with each other. They have worked collaboratively to create a very positive and purposeful climate for learning. In almost all lessons, young people are very well behaved, responsible and cooperate well with adults. Staff and young people worked very well together to create a school charter and positive relationships policy, underpinned by children's rights. These are supporting an inclusive and nurturing learning environment. As a result, young people feel a strong sense of belonging to their school community. A few young people, at times, exhibit dysregulated behaviours. Teachers respond to these situations positively and in a solutions-focused manner to help young people to re-engage with their learning.
- Young people are welcoming and proud to be proactive members of their school and local community. Almost all young people are motivated to succeed. They arrive at lessons ready and eager to learn. Most young people enjoy their learning. They demonstrate high levels of motivation in a minority of lessons where they experience regular high-quality opportunities to lead aspects of their learning. This includes working in groups, in pairs and through well-considered opportunities to provide peer support.
- Almost all young people are highly motivated when they are provided with rich contexts for learning in different environments such as outdoor spaces. In the majority of lessons, activities are overly teacher led with young people undertaking the same activities at the same pace. This results in young people becoming passive in their learning. Senior leaders and staff have begun work to develop young people's independent learning skills. This work is at an early stage but has the potential to support young people to be more active in their learning.
- Almost all teachers know young people very well. They access high-quality information about young people's needs from support for learning staff. This includes positive strategies and suggested approaches for teachers to meet young people's needs. Most teachers use this information well to adapt learning effectively for young people who require additional support with their learning. This includes providing individualised support in classes and regular checking of progress. Teachers should continue to develop their approaches to differentiating tasks, activities and materials ensuring they are well matched to the needs of all young people.

- Senior leaders and teachers have developed a clear learning, teaching and assessment policy which details agreed standards of classroom structures. This is supporting improvements to the classroom routines experienced by young people. Most teachers, for example, share the purpose of learning and measures of success routinely at the start of lessons. As a next step, most teachers should review the measures of success during and at the end of periods of learning. They should support all young people to identify more confidently their progress in learning.
- Most teachers provide clear and effective explanations to young people when introducing tasks and activities. Most teachers use helpful questioning techniques to check young people's knowledge and understanding. A few teachers use very well-considered questions to encourage young people to think deeply about their learning. This helps them to develop their higher-order thinking skills. This practice should be shared more widely and embedded across the school.
- Most young people demonstrate enhanced digital literacy skills. They use digital resources confidently to support their learning. This includes researching topics, completing tasks, accessing resources, and receiving feedback from teachers via digital platforms. A few young people access learning through a valued online provision from external partners. This allows them to interact with other young people from across the local area through digital platforms. A few teachers are beginning to use artificial intelligence as a highly effective tool for supporting learning within the classroom. A few young people who require support with their learning use digital devices well to access support discreetly. Teachers should continue to develop their use of digital technology to offer creative learning experiences to all young people.
- Most teachers use a range of appropriate assessment strategies to measure young people's progress in learning. These include the well-planned use of regular summative and standardised assessments. A majority of teachers use formative assessment strategies well to check regularly young people's understanding of concepts. This includes the use of show-me boards and digital quizzes. A few teachers use effective self- and peer- assessment approaches to help young people gather clear information about their progress in learning.
- The majority of teachers provide clear and well-considered feedback to young people. Almost all young people recognise that feedback helps them to evaluate their progress in learning. Most teachers use learner conversations effectively to help young people understand their progress. Young people use time with class tutors to review and discuss their learning across the school. Most young people understand their current working grade and strengths in their work. Teachers should now ensure all young people understand fully their next steps in learning as part of feedback and learner conversations. This should support young people to accelerate further their progress in learning.
- Most teachers plan learning well over the short and medium term, using appropriate national guidance. They are developing further their skills in applying national standards in the broad general education (BGE). Senior leaders are supporting teachers well to undertake further

work on developing their confidence in applying national Benchmarks in relation to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) fourth level. Teachers in larger departments work together well to conduct regular and well-planned moderation activities. Teachers value being part of strong local authority subject networks established across the local authority. Many of these are led by staff from the school. This ensures all teachers explore national standards with colleagues regularly. Teachers from a few departments have well established networks with primary colleagues. Through these networks, teachers continue to enhance shared approaches to planning and applying assessment standards. Senior leaders should continue to work with all teachers to develop approaches to moderation, including those that consider planning within the broader learning, teaching and assessment cycle.

- Most teachers demonstrate a sound understanding of applying standards relating to National Qualifications (NQ). Teachers from across the school serve as examination marking appointees and help colleagues to make accurate judgements of young people's progress and attainment in courses. This is resulting in a strong correlation between teachers' assessments judgements and young people's final awards. Staff use this knowledge very effectively to prepare young people in the senior phase to attain well.
- Most middle leaders and staff use robust processes for monitoring and tracking young people's progress in the senior phase. The majority of teachers continue to develop their approaches to track the progress of young people in the BGE. They use data effectively to identify young people who are not on track with their learning and to inform appropriate interventions to support improvements. Staff should continue to develop their ability to use data strategically to plan improvements to courses, learning pathways and individual lessons. Teachers should ensure they use information effectively to plan learning that provides all young people with appropriate levels of challenge in their learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff have developed a clear and effective curriculum rationale focused on developing a wide range of pathways for young people. Staff have undertaken professional learning to improve their curricular planning. They collaborate very well with partners to develop a shared and ambitious commitment to meeting the aspirations of learners.
- Young people in S1 and S2 experience their curricular entitlements and learn across all curricular areas. Staff identify correctly that greater collaborative curricular planning is required with associated primary schools. In S3, learners experience increased choice. Senior leaders should consider how to ensure young people experience their entitlements in all curricular areas as well as languages learning in line with national expectations. In a few departments, skills in literacy and numeracy are now being developed as a responsibility of all. This development is at an early stage and senior leaders should plan how to embed this work across all departments.
- Through staff's highly creative and flexible approaches, young people choose from an extensive range of courses in the senior phase. These courses allow learners to progress within a variety of high-quality pathways and have increased the use of real-life contexts for learning. Staff collaborate effectively with a range of partners, including local employers, to increase young people's engagement with work-based learning. Staff ensure thoughtfully a parity of esteem between academic, vocational and technical learner pathways. All faculties have broadened their curriculum offer to include a range of vocational and technical qualifications, such as National Progression Awards and Foundation Apprenticeships. Senior leaders should consider ways to ensure learners in the senior phase experience their entitlement to religious education.
- The personal and social education (PSE) programme is underpinned by the Career Education Standard 3-18 and young people experience their entitlements in this area. Careers education is supported well by the provision of one-to-one and group engagements. Young people are supported well to make subject choices at key milestones.
- School staff work effectively with the regional college to provide an appropriate range of qualifications in the senior phase from the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 3-6, across a broad range of subject areas. In addition, a few young people undertake a Foundation Academy in Healthcare in conjunction with a partner university. This is helping to meet learners' needs and improve their experiences and outcomes. As planned, senior leaders should continue to review regularly the curriculum to ensure young people experience clear and progressive pathways across all subject areas.
- Teachers use the school's meta-skills framework well to plan a wide range of activities within specified skills classes in S1-S3. These classes offer young people the opportunity to develop important skills. Most learners in the BGE recognise and articulate their skills, however, this is an area for development in the senior phase. Learners have limited formal opportunities to

identify and reflect on their skills. As a next step, senior leaders should work with learners, staff and partners to continue to embed a whole school approach to skills development to ensure that all staff embed meta skills in learning.

- The school library is a valued and well-used resource. Young people enjoy a wide range of materials and are also involved in suggesting texts and influencing activities.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Most parents agree that the school is improving. They feel that staff have developed a very positive and respectful environment where young people are supported well to succeed. They report that staff are approachable and helpful in their response to any issues.
- Senior leaders identified the need to strengthen parental engagement as a key priority. They are improving how they communicate with parents. Most parents appreciate the range of methods staff use to inform them about their child's progress and to share whole school information. This includes social media, emails, newsletters, and a commercial platform. As a result of this work, almost all parents feel that communication is improving.
- The Parent Council supports the school well, particularly through fundraising. They provide well-received support for young people to participate in events and excursions. The Parent Council values being consulted on planned change and the school improvement plan. They recognise the need to broaden their reach to the wider parent forum. The Parent Council should continue to expand their methods of informing parents about their work, using the school's established communication channels.

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

- Staff's positive and nurturing relationships with young people leads to a calm and supportive learning environment. These relationships are underpinned by the school values and a culture of mutual respect. This is supporting almost all young people to feel safe at school and to recognise they have a trusted adult to speak to if they are worried or upset. Almost all young people demonstrate consistently positive and responsible behaviour. They are confident in their interactions with others and play an active role in contributing to the positive school ethos, promoting a culture of respect and responsibility. Almost all young people have a strong sense of belonging to their school community.
- Staff and young people are working well together to create a rights-based positive relationship policy. This has supported the successful and consistent implementation of a new merit system. Young people are awarded merits for demonstrating the school values or meta-skills in their daily interactions. Young people and parents value this recognition as it reinforces positive behaviour. A few young people benefit from planned reflection and restorative approaches on a few occasions where their behaviour is not positive. This helps young people to address their behaviours and move forward positively.
- Almost all staff support thoughtfully young people's wellbeing. This is helping most young people to feel cared for and valued members of the school community. Senior leaders have introduced recently a new approach to gather data more regularly about young people's wellbeing. They should continue to work with staff to develop how this data is used to plan universal and targeted support. Staff and young people should continue to develop a shared language and understanding of wellbeing. This should help young people to communicate and understand better their wellbeing strengths and needs, and to set targets for improvements to wellbeing. Most staff use the helpful professional learning on nurturing principles and equity to provide young people with a safe environment in which they can thrive and develop.
- Most young people display a strong understanding of how to be healthy and active. Staff in a few subject areas promote effectively the benefits of positive mental and physical health. Young people value the extensive range of sports clubs and activities offered, many provided by young people in S6 or school partners. A few young people adopt leadership roles in relation to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. This includes young people in the senior phase who act as

buddies to young people in S1. These approaches help most young people to display a well-developed understanding of their health as well as strong emotional resilience.

- A majority of young people benefit from positive learning opportunities through the PSE curriculum. A range of partners support the delivery of PSE, providing valuable inputs and helping to explore relevant issues in young people's lives and those impacting on the local community. This includes, for example, a recent focus on young carers which resulted in a few young people being identified for increased support. Pupil support staff recognise the need to develop further the PSE curriculum and the quality of learners' experiences. Young people are beginning to evaluate the PSE curriculum. Staff should continue to build on this, as planned, so that the PSE programme is consistently relevant and progressive.
- Staff fulfil their statutory duties well. Staff work collaboratively with partners to plan and implement a wide range of staged intervention supports for targeted young people. Groups of young people benefit from well-considered inputs which results in improved outcomes, such as regular attendance, stronger attainment and enhanced self-esteem.
- Young people are supported very well as they make important transitions to and from secondary school. Staff organise a range of well-considered events to get to know young people's needs and to develop positive relationships between peers. A few learners who require enhanced transitions benefit from additional experiences and enhanced family engagement. As a result, almost all young people are supported well to transition to secondary successfully and with increased confidence. Young people are supported effectively through a range of well-considered programmes to make successful transitions to post-school destinations.
- Student support staff share appropriate information with staff relating to young people who require additional support with their learning or wellbeing. They provide detailed pupil profiles including proposed strategies to meet learners' needs. Almost all staff demonstrate an understanding of young people's additional support needs. Staff should continue to develop how they use this information to support young people's learning and wellbeing needs in classes. A few learners experience targeted and effective learning and wellbeing support from a whole school learning provision. A few young people self-refer which supports them well to self-regulate their emotions and continue with learning.
- A few young people who require additional support with their learning or wellbeing benefit from having an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a Child's Plan in place. These plans outline comprehensively young people's targets and are helping to meet their wellbeing and learning needs effectively. Staff should continue to develop further their planning processes, with greater parent and learner involvement. They should ensure that all targets are specific, measurable, shared with the wider staff team and reviewed regularly. Staff need to ensure that all young people's learning and wellbeing needs are met consistently well across the school.
- Staff ensure care experienced young people are considered appropriately for a Co-ordinated Support Plan. Care experienced young people benefit from carefully considered support from

staff and partners. This is resulting in positive outcomes for identified young people, including attendance and engagement with school. Young people are considered appropriately for a young carer's statement. They should be supported further to confidently share their experiences and needs to staff.

- Senior leaders and staff have developed effective approaches to support young people and families very well to maintain positive levels of attendance at school. A few young people attend school on a part-time basis. Staff ensure that these arrangements are applied appropriately and maintain a focus on returning young people to full time learning as soon as possible. A few young people with significant barriers to attendance are re-engaging and achieving qualifications as a result.
- 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.
- Almost all young people and most parents feel that staff respond effectively when bullying is reported. Senior leaders should continue as planned to develop their policies and procedures for managing bullying incidents. They should ensure all incidents of bullying and conflict continue to be recorded systematically. This should help them to identify any patterns or trends in behaviour and to address them proactively. A few young people in the senior phase act as mentors in violence prevention (MVP), delivering learning to younger peers during PSE. This learning is helping young people in the BGE to challenge gender biases and develop respect for others.
- A few young people participate in activities and groups to promote further inclusion across the school. They are raising awareness of inclusion and aspects of the protected characteristics through assemblies and wall displays. Young people have a greater understanding of protected characteristics which supports positive and respectful relationships amongst peers. Staff in a majority of departments include learning on diversity and discrimination as part of learning across the curriculum, for example, through text choice in drama and English. Staff should develop this further by mapping young people's learning about inclusion and equality across the school. This needs to help young people to make clear links between their learning to support greater awareness and understanding.
- Most young people have a developing understanding of the importance of their rights. The school community has successfully gained accredited recognition for their work on children's rights. Staff should continue with the positive start in incorporating a rights-based approach into young people's daily learning experiences.

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

Broad General Education (BGE)

- Staff who lead on improving literacy and numeracy continue to develop effective strategies to raise further young people's attainment. As a result, performance in literacy and numeracy has generally increased across the three-year period from 2021/22 until 2023/24. Between 2021/22 and 2023/24, almost all young people achieved CfE third level in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. In 2023/24, a majority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. Staff, through rigorous monitoring of young people's progress, can demonstrate significant added value from prior levels of attainment as learners progress through the BGE. This is particularly evident in how young people develop in literacy.
- Staff identify and support effectively young people who require individual interventions to attain well in literacy and numeracy. These young people are progressing very well against their individual milestones.
- Staff are continuing to develop strategies to improve literacy and numeracy. They recognise the need to strengthen further their judgements about young people's achievement of a level in the BGE. They should proceed with plans to work with primary colleagues to increase moderation activities.

Senior phase

Leavers

- Between 2021/22 and 2023/24, most young people left school with SCQF level 5 or better in literacy, in line with the virtual comparator (VC). Almost all young people had achieved this level in the previous two-year period. A minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 or better in literacy in 2023/24, which is significantly much lower than the VC. Previously, between 2020/21 and 2022/23, the majority of young people had attained literacy at this level and this had been sustained in line with the VC. Senior leaders and staff who lead on this area have identified the reasons for this recent decrease and have plans to improve this measure. They provided data from their whole school tracking system which predicts improvements for current learners.

- In 2022/23 and 2023/24, most young people left school with SCQF level 5 or better and a minority left with SCQF level 6 in numeracy. Performance in numeracy for all levels is showing a three-year pattern of improvement between 2021/22 and 2023/24 and is in line with the VC over this time.
- Young people who require additional support with their learning left school with levels of literacy qualifications at SCQF level 5 and for literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 6, substantially below comparators and national levels. Staff have developed interventions designed to provide more effective individualised literacy and numeracy support for young people with additional support needs.

Cohorts

Literacy

- At S4, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy between 2020/21 and 2024/25, in line with the VC, with the exception of 2022/23 when this dipped to being a majority. Performance at this level is generally increasing between 2022/23 and 2024/25. By S5, and by S6, as a percentage of the S4 roll, just over half of the cohort of young people achieved SCQF level 6 or better in literacy between 2020/21 and 2024/25. Performance is stable and in line with the VC.

Numeracy

- At S4, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in 2024/25. Performance at this level is demonstrating a clear pattern of improvement across the five-year period from 2020/21 until 2023/24 when a majority of young people achieved at this level. By S5, and by S6, as a percentage of the S4 roll, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 or better in numeracy across the same five-year period in line with the VC. Performance at SCQF level 6 is generally improving over this period.

National Qualifications

- Young people's presentation levels in NQs in English and mathematics at National 5 are generally in line with or above national levels, with pass rates above national levels. Staff also offer applications of mathematics and entries are substantially above national presentation levels. However, the pass rate is notably below national levels and staff acknowledge that this requires improvement as a priority and are implementing interventions this session based on more rigorous tracking information. Presentation levels at Higher level are substantially below national levels for mathematics and notably above for applications of mathematics and English. The pass rate for both English and mathematics at this level is below national levels in 2024/25.

Attainment over time

BGE

- Staff do not currently have data to show young people's attainment over time for curricular areas other than literacy and numeracy. Over the past few sessions, senior leaders have strengthened whole school systems to measure young people's attainment over time. Data from these newly implemented systems demonstrate that in 2024/25, most young people achieved CfE third level, and a minority achieved CfE fourth level in their chosen subjects by the

end of S3. Senior leaders and staff recognise that further improvements are required to ensure the reliability of staff's judgements about young people's achievement of CfE fourth level. Senior leaders are supporting staff well to engage in work to strengthen their assessment judgements and understand better young people's progress through a level. Staff should continue to use this data to ensure all young people make the most aspirational transition to the senior phase. They should also use this data to measure closely the attainment of individuals and groups who face additional barriers to their learning.

Senior phase

Improving attainment for all

Leavers

- In 2023/24, attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of young people, and the middle attaining 60% of young people, when using average complementary tariff scores, is significantly much lower than the VC, having previously been generally in line with the VC. Performance of the highest attaining 20% of young people has been in line with the VC between 2019/20 and 2023/24. Performance for all these groups of young people leaving school has generally been following patterns of decline from 2019/20 levels.
- Generally, the attainment of leavers who require additional support with their learning is notably below the VC and showing patterns of decline.
- Senior leaders acknowledge that the attainment of young people leaving school requires improvement. They are using information from strengthened tracking systems to identify and support young people more effectively to make appropriate progress. Senior leaders provided data from these systems to show that currently young people's attainment is predicted to increase.

Cohorts

- At S4, by S5 and S6, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, the middle attaining 60% and the highest attaining 20% of young people is generally in line with the VC. The exception is for the middle attaining 60% of young people at S4 in 2024/25, which is significantly higher than the VC. Generally, performance at S4 and S6 does not show a consistent pattern of improvement. Performance of all groups of young people by S5 is generally following patterns of decline between 2022/23 and 2024/25.

Breadth and depth

- Senior leaders identified previously that there were decreases in young people's attainment at S4 and targeted a successful focus on this year group. They used stronger monitoring systems to support young people more effectively to complete courses. This is showing increases in 2024/25 data with most young people achieving three or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better. This is significantly much higher than the VC, having been significantly lower than the VC in 2023/24. Between 2020/21 and 2024/5, the majority of young people achieved five or more awards. This was in line with the VC until 2024/25, when this increased to being significantly higher than the VC.

- By S5, a minority of young people achieve four or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better with a few achieving five or more awards at this level. Performance at this level is stable and has been in line with the VC between 2020/21 and 2024/25.
- By S6, a minority of young people generally achieve five or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better with a few achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better. Performance at SCQF level 6C or better was in line with the VC from 2020/21 until 2023/24, increasing in 2024/25 to being significantly higher than the VC. Between 2022/23 and 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved one or more awards and a few attained two or more awards at SCQF level 7C. Performance at SCQF level 7C or better and SCQF level 7A or better is in line with the VC and generally showing improvement.

Attendance

- Senior leaders and staff maintain a relentless focus on improving young people's attendance at school. They know young people and families well and use these relationships effectively to offer bespoke and well-considered support. Staff have developed a clear strategy to support improved attendance. They are monitoring and tracking attendance robustly and working closely with parents to address barriers to regular attendance. This involves setting specific targets for a few young people and celebrating their improvements. Positively, as a result of this work, attendance rates are returning to pre-pandemic levels with incremental increases to annual data demonstrated. Importantly, the school community have developed a shared understanding and appreciation for the impact attendance has on attainment.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- All young people are encouraged by staff who know them well to participate in a wide range of achievement activities available in the school. Young people value being able to influence the range of achievements on offer. Young people develop useful technical skills and improve their confidence through a wide range of sports, arts and games which are matched well to young people's interests. Just under half of the school roll develop important skills and teamwork through participation in at least one sport. Young people develop key leadership skills and significantly improve their confidence through their leadership roles. This includes, for example, enhancing their organisation and peer support skills by designing and delivering effectively sessions to their peers and supporting transitions from primary to secondary.
- Young people's achievements are recognised and celebrated well through a range of approaches. This includes, for example, notice boards, social media and a regular newsletter. Young people feel valued and are confident to regularly share with school staff their achievements outside of school. The merit system is motivating young people to engage in achievement activities. Staff offer a well-considered annual celebration event which is greatly valued by young people and their families. All young people receive recognition for their efforts, progress and achievements and this encourages them to achieve further success.
- Staff are at the very early stages of implementing a system to track young people's participation in achievements. They are using this thoughtfully to identify any young person

not engaged in activities to achieve. Staff should develop further this system to track the quality of all young people's achievement over time. Young people would benefit from having a complete record of all their achievements throughout their school experience. Staff should ensure this includes accredited learning and outcomes achieved through partnership programmes.

- Staff are developing a whole school approach to developing young people's skills. As a result, young people can describe the skills they are developing through their achievements and describe their next steps. Young people in the senior phase value how well their skills are helping them with college and university applications and job interviews.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders allocate PEF successfully to improve young people's wellbeing, attendance and engagement. Senior leaders are beginning to track the progress and attainment of groups of young people affected by socio-economic disadvantage. There is evidence that the attainment of this group of young people is improving and identified attainment gaps closing. When compared using average complementary tariff scores, the attainment of young people who left school, and who live in SIMD decile five has increased from being significantly lower than the VC in 2022/23 to being significantly much higher than the VC in 2023/24. Generally, young people's performance is broadly comparable to other learners who reside in similar deciles nationally.
- Senior leaders and staff should continue to explore equity across the school. They should proceed with plans to identify and monitor the progress more systematically of all young people who may experience socio-economic disadvantage. They should continue to develop their approaches so that all staff can identify and demonstrate improvements in closing poverty-related attainment gaps.
- Well-established partnerships between staff and partners such as SDS, further and higher education providers, and carefully chosen employers, support high levels of positive destinations for young people leaving school. The Employability Coordinating Group meets regularly to identify young people at risk of not progressing to a positive destination on leaving school. They have supported effectively and sensitively young people who were disengaged or experience barriers to achieving through targeted interventions. This includes, for example, working with the Better Lives Partnership, to support effectively young people who require additional support with their learning to develop important employability skills, and take part in well-planned work experience and enterprise initiative. This is successfully supporting the young people involved in these initiatives to transition well into employment, further training or a volunteering role. As a result of these highly impactful approaches, almost all young people progressed to a positive destination on leaving school between 2019/20 and 2023/24, in line with the VC.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Senior leaders, along with staff who have responsibility for DYW, have developed a highly impactful strategy to prepare young people with the knowledge and confidence required for the world of work through their approach to Developing the Young Workforce. This is reflective of their school community's context and lies at the heart of the school's impactful vision. Staff have developed this strategy with a progressive and engaging range of highly effective partnerships. The strategy is aligned well to their annual courses and careers event. Staff ensure that all young people's pathways are valued with parity of esteem. Young people benefit from progressive and engaging inputs through this approach. Young people, as a result, are well supported to progress to their post-school destinations.

Staff publish fortnightly '*Sector Spotlights*' which connect curricular areas, meta-skills and careers with industry sectors. This provides teachers and young people with a sector overview, relevant learning pathways, popular careers, key meta-skills and career connection questions with school subjects. This very useful advice is shared with young people through the school bulletin. It also helps support learning conversations between staff and young people. The sector spotlights have covered areas important to the school's context. This includes, for example, animals, land, environment, hospitality, catering, tourism, healthcare and life sciences. There are also important links to construction, design, crafts, education and performing arts.

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.