

Summarised inspection findings

Inveralmond Community High School

West Lothian Council

30 May 2023

Key contextual information

School Name: Inveralmond Community High School
Council: West Lothian Council
SEED number: 5502632
Roll (Sep 2022): 1004 pupils

Inveralmond Community High School is located in the town of Livingston in West Lothian. The school has six associated primary schools. In September 2021, 25.9 per cent of pupils lived in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In February 2022, 27.1 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

The headteacher has been in post since 2016 and is supported by two full time deputy headteachers.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average. Exclusions are generally in line with the national average. Senior leaders highlighted challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included high levels of absence for both young people and staff. This also interrupted planned and ongoing work to improve learning, teaching and assessment.

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

- The ethos and culture of the school is characterised by the school values of respect, kindness and honesty. Young people are welcoming and keen to learn. Almost all relationships between young people and staff are positive. Most young people report that teachers treat them fairly and with respect.
- Most young people participate well in learning during lessons. Teachers provide clear and effective explanations and instructions in most lessons. Almost all teachers use routines, such as starter activities, to engage young people quickly in learning. In a few lessons these can take too long and result in disengagement. Staff need to raise their expectations of all young people so that they are fully engaged and ready to learn.
- Most staff have a good awareness of the needs of young people and build on their prior learning. In a majority of lessons, learning activities are challenging, interactive and enjoyable and as a result, young people are enthusiastic and motivated. A significant minority of lessons are directed to the whole class and are not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all learners. This includes the pace of learning being too slow for more able learners. This can result in young people being passive in lessons and not always making appropriate progress in their learning. In lessons where the pace is aligned better to their needs, young people are more engaged in their learning and remain on task. Young people, particularly in the broad general education (BGE), would benefit from greater levels of challenge in their learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers share with young people the purpose of learning and how they can be successful in their learning. In a few lessons, the criteria for learners to be successful are differentiated which provides more challenge for young people and helps them to understand how they can make further progress in their learning. Young people have opportunities to peer- and self-assess against these criteria in a minority of classes. This is improving their awareness of their strengths and next steps in learning and helping them to take more responsibility for their own learning. Young people, particularly in the BGE, would benefit from more opportunities to peer- and self-assess to improve their understanding of their progress in learning.
- The majority of young people are given opportunities to influence what and how they learn, particularly in the senior phase. Teachers should continue to extend opportunities for all young people to be engaged fully in planning and leading their learning.
- Most young people, particularly in the senior phase, value the regular written and oral feedback they receive from teachers. This helps them to understand their strengths and next steps in learning. They have an understanding of the levels at which they are working.

- Almost all teachers use questioning to help learners to recall knowledge and understanding. Teachers need to develop stronger approaches to questioning which develops the higher-order thinking skills of young people and actively engages all learners in discussions about learning.
- The majority of teachers use digital technology to support learning. Young people in the senior phase use the learning and teaching resources developed and shared on a range of digital platforms well. Staff are well placed to build on recent improvements to their skills and their understanding of the potential that digital technology has to re-invigorate learning, particularly in the BGE.
- In the senior phase, teachers have a strong understanding of assessment standards in National Qualifications developed through well-planned moderation activities within and beyond the school. Staff engage with a range of professional networks including the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) and local subject teams to ensure a shared understanding of standards. This supports them to plan more effectively to meet the needs of learners across the curriculum.
- Almost all teachers are making good use of the learning, teaching and assessment cycle to improve the planning of learning, teaching and assessment in the BGE. They are also making use of an appropriately wide range of assessment evidence.
- Almost all faculties have links with teachers in other schools to verify their assessment judgements. As a result, teachers in most faculties are becoming more confident in using assessment evidence to make professional judgements about learners' progress. Teachers in all subject areas should continue to develop confidence in increasing the reliability of these judgments. In a few departments, teachers are moderating planning as well as assessment. A next step is to share this practice across the school so that teachers plan for learning and teaching experiences that will continue to raise attainment.
- Within faculties, teachers use information about young people's progress and attainment to identify potential barriers to learning. They then support learners who are at risk of not achieving their best through well-considered interventions. Teachers should develop this approach to target young people who require greater levels of challenge. Young people would benefit from more involvement in agreeing aspirational target grades. Senior leaders should consider how teachers can better use this data to identify and address the needs of individuals and cohorts of young people.
- Senior and middle leaders should proceed as planned to build on the well-developed programme of professional learning to improve learning, teaching and assessment. All teachers demonstrate a sustained commitment to reflecting upon and improving their practice through their involvement in practitioner enquiry. This work is improving aspects of the practice of individual teachers. This is increasing the consistency of sharing the purpose of learning and success criteria with young people, for example. Staff should continue to develop their shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching and embed this consistently across the school.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

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)

- In 2021/22, almost all young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level or better in all literacy measures and numeracy by the end of S3. The majority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in all literacy measures and in numeracy.
- Teachers in English and mathematics are working effectively with colleagues from associated primary schools to improve the quality and reliability of their assessment judgements regarding literacy and numeracy. This is helping staff to plan support for individuals and cohorts as they move into S1 and through the BGE. Teachers also identify areas for further focus and development, such as the need to improve writing. Senior leaders should now consider how the strategy could be developed further so that curriculum areas other than English and mathematics can contribute to improvements in these areas.

Senior phase

- Almost all young people leaving school between 2017/18 and 2021/22 left school with Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF) level 3 or better in literacy and numeracy. This is in line with the virtual comparator (VC). Staff who lead improvements in literacy and numeracy are implementing a more rigorous tracking process to identify young people who are at risk of leaving school without at least SCQF level 3 qualifications in literacy and numeracy. They should continue with plans to ensure more young people achieve as well as possible in literacy and numeracy.

Leavers

- Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, almost all young people left school with SCQF level 4 in literacy. This is in line with the VC. Most young people leaving school in 2017/18, 2020/21 and in 2021/22 achieved SCQF level 5 in literacy. In the last two years, this was significantly lower than the VC. Less than half of leavers achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy between 2017/18 and 2021/22, apart from 2020/21 when it increased to a majority. In 2018/19, 2020/21 and 2021/22, the number of young people leaving school who achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy was significantly lower than the VC.
- Most young people leaving school between 2017/18 and 2021/22 achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy. Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. In 2021/22 this was significantly lower than the VC, having previously been significantly higher than the VC in 2017/18 and 2018/19. Since 2017/18, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This is in line with the VC.

Cohorts

- At S4, there are improving levels of performance at SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. The majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in 2021/22. This was the highest level in five years. By S5, based on the S4 roll, a majority achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy in the latest year, 2021/22. This is in line with the VC, having previously been significantly lower. A minority of young people in S5 achieved SCQF level 6 between 2017/18 to 2021/22. This was in line with the VC until 2021/22 where it was significantly lower than the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, a majority achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. In 2021/22, attainment at this level was significantly lower than the VC. At SCQF level 6, just under half of young people achieved literacy. This is in line with the VC.
- At S4, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy over the five-year period, with the exception of 2020/21. In S5, based on the S4 roll, the majority achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. This is significantly lower than the VC in the latest year, 2021/22. This is a decline from previous years and since 2017/18 when most young people achieved SCQF level 5 numeracy. Between 2017/18 to 2021/22, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This is in line with the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, attainment in numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better is in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 with the percentage of young people achieving numeracy in line with the VC.

Attainment over time

BGE

- By the end of S3, most young people are achieving CfE third level or better in most curriculum areas other than literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Senior leaders have improved tracking processes recently. Teachers are becoming increasingly confident in using assessment evidence to make professional judgements about learners' attainment in the BGE and are continuing to improve the reliability of these judgements across subject areas. These are providing more helpful data for teachers, young people and parents/carers. Senior leaders and staff are beginning to use this data to identify and address gaps in learning.

Senior phase

- Senior leaders are developing and implementing a well-considered strategy to raise the attainment and achievement of all young people. This includes plans to increase the quality of passes and grades for the highest attaining young people. Teaching staff need to use tracking data more effectively to improve the attainment of all learners.
- Senior leaders have identified the need to improve the attainment of young people in S6. They are implementing processes which are already resulting in these learners accessing a greater breadth of courses and more appropriate levels of challenge. Senior leaders should continue with plans to improve the attainment of all young people in S6, ensuring that all these learners receive appropriate support to meet their needs.

Improving attainment for all

Leavers

- Attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of leavers has been consistently in line with the VC since 2019/20. For the middle attaining 60% of leavers, attainment was in line with the VC from 2017/18 to 2021/22, apart from 2020/21 when it was significantly lower. Attainment of the highest attaining 20% of leavers was significantly much lower than the VC between 2017/18 and 2021/22, apart from 2019/20 when it was significantly lower.

Cohorts

- In S4, by S5 and by S6, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people is generally in line with the VC with the exception of the highest 20% of young people by S6. Since 2017/18, the attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people in S6 has been significantly lower than the VC, apart from 2018/19 where it was significantly much lower than the VC.

Breadth and depth

- Staff have increased the offer of SCQF courses to young people to include a wider range of qualifications such as National Progression Awards and Foundation Apprenticeships. Staff should ensure that this is reviewed regularly so that all young people follow a learning pathway which offers appropriate depth as well as breadth.
- At S4, the majority of young people achieved six or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better since 2019/20. This is in line with the VC. The majority of young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better in the latest five year period. A minority achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better since 2017/18. This is in line with the VC. The majority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better since 2020/21. A minority of young people achieved two or more awards at this level over the latest five years. This is in line with the VC in 2021/22, having been significantly lower in 2020/21.
- By S5, a majority of young people achieved four or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better between 2017/18 and 2021/22. This is in line with the VC, apart from 2020/21 when the percentage of young people gaining three or more awards was significantly lower than the VC. The majority of young people achieved two or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better between 2018/19 and 2021/22. This is in line with the VC. Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, a minority of young people achieved four or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better, in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 5A or above. This is significantly lower than the VC for 2021/22. In 2021/22, half of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better. This is in line with the VC. Since 2017/18, a minority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 6A. This is significantly lower than the VC for the latest year. A few young people achieved two or more to five or more awards at SCQF level 6A. This is generally significantly lower than the VC since 2017/18, apart from 2019/20 and 2020/21.
- By S6, a majority of young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 5C. This has been in line with the VC since 2018/19. Since 2018/19, a majority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 6C. This is in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 6C. This has been in line with the VC since 2018/19 when it was significantly lower for those achieving four or more to five or more awards. A minority of young people attained two or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better in 2021/22, in line with the VC. This was previously much lower than the VC. Since 2017/18, a few young people achieved awards at SCQF level 7C or better. The number of young people achieving one or more to two or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better has been significantly lower than the VC since 2018/19 when it was significantly much lower.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people develop team working skills through their participation in a wide range of clubs and activities delivered by peers, staff and partners. Young people can influence the choice on offer such as the recent introduction of a rugby and chess club and a few learners take responsibility for leading these activities.

- Young people are developing leadership skills through a range of well-planned out of class activities. Staff work with young people enthusiastically to co-ordinate the work of various groups through the Pupil Parliament. These groups include the successful Rights' Respecting School group, the Wellbeing group, the LGBT+ Charter group and learner voice groups. A minority of young people in the senior phase are benefiting from leadership positions through programmes for subject ambassadors and Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP). Ambassadors and learner representatives meet regularly with senior leaders to agree solutions to issues raised by young people. This is helping young people to increase their confidence, build communication skills and develop greater responsibility for their school community.
- Staff have introduced systems to track the participation and engagement levels of young people involved in out of class activities. Staff use this information to identify gaps in young people's achievement. As part of this recent development, staff are creating a skills framework to enable them to track and monitor the skills that young people are developing through achievement.
- Young people are building leadership, teamworking skills and confidence through their engagement in programmes which are well-matched to their needs. These include, for example, courses in data science, beauty skills, automotive skills and Scottish FA refereeing.
- Young people's achievements are celebrated regularly through individual departments as well as at whole school level. This includes highlighting successes through individual year group newsletters, a range of digital platforms and applications, the school app, assemblies, achievement boards and awards events.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a strong commitment to pursuing equity as a result of their deep understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school. Senior leaders have led a well-considered whole school focus on the cost of the school day and this is removing barriers to young people's participation and achievement.
- Senior leaders use the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to improve attendance, support families and to work closely with associated primary schools to improve literacy and numeracy. They track the impact of these interventions effectively. For example, young people receiving additional targeted support are improving their literacy and numeracy skills. The post of the Family Link Worker is embedded and these staff are having a positive impact on strengthening parental engagement and improving attendance.
- Staff use a well-established tracking system to monitor the progress of learners, including those affected by poverty. Data shows these learners are achieving well and progressing to positive destinations on leaving school. The attainment of young people leaving school living in SIMD deciles one and two, when compared using complementary tariff points, is in line with the national average. There have been improvements since 2018/19 when this measure was significantly lower than the national average for those living in SIMD decile one. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that the PEF continues to raise attainment and accelerate progress for all young people affected by poverty.
- A range of partnership working is supporting young people to progress to a positive post-school destination. This includes a well-received programme by Stirling University which helps young people to make a successful transition to higher education and the 'More Choices/More Chances' partnership which provides effective support for young people who require additional support to make the transition from school. Almost all young people move to a positive destination on leaving school. All young people who left from S4 in 2021/22

progressed to a positive destination and this is significantly much higher than the VC. The majority of young people go to higher or further education, with a minority going to employment.

Other relevant evidence

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to compliance with the Nutritional Regulations and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007(the Act). The Health and Nutrition Inspector discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the catering provider.
- Young people have the opportunity to visit the school library in groups as part of their S1 experience. The school librarian works with the English department to plan opportunities for young people and contribute to initiatives such as Reading Schools accreditation.
- Young people experience their entitlements to PE. They do not receive their full entitlement to RME and Languages 1+2. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to ensure all young people receive their entitlements.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.