

Summarised inspection findings

Rutherglen High School

South Lanarkshire Council

24 September 2024

Key contextual information

School Name: Rutherglen High School
Council: South Lanarkshire Council
SEED number: 8550948
Roll: 121

Rutherglen High School is a non-denominational special school located in Cambuslang. It is part of the Cathkin Learning Community. The school provides education for young people with significant additional support needs from across South Lanarkshire Council. There are seventeen classes in the school, seven of which are base classes where young people spend most of their school day in a single classroom. The other ten classes are supported classes where young people move from department to department across the school day.

A majority of young people reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 to 3. In 2020/21, pupil attendance was in line with the national average. Pupil attendance in 2022/23 and 2023/24 has decreased significantly, with a minority of young people not attending school regularly. Exclusions are below the national average.

A headteacher from a neighbouring special school in South Lanarkshire Council has been acting as a temporary peer headteacher since March 2024. A new headteacher has been successfully recruited and is due to take up post in August 2024.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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 school values of respect, kindness, trust, empathy, inclusion, and everyone being valued, are not consistently evident within the culture of the school. Senior leaders and staff need to work closely with young people, parents, and partners to create a positive school ethos and culture. They need to ensure young people learn within a supportive, inclusive and nurturing environment.
- The majority of young people engage well in their learning. They are enthusiastic and enjoy attending a range of subjects across the school day. When provided with challenging learning activities, young people demonstrate high levels of interest and motivation. Staff need to ensure that all young people across the school are consistently provided with challenging and purposeful learning experiences throughout the school day. In particular, young people in base classes require improved levels of challenge and support in their learning. A few young people have limited opportunities to learn alongside their peers. Staff should ensure that all learners have appropriate opportunities to learn and interact with other young people.

- Senior leaders and staff need to improve collegiate and collaborative working across the school. All staff should engage in more professional learning, relevant to the context of the school and the additional support needs of young people.
- Most young people display positive behaviours towards each other. Most young people act responsibly as they move around the school and transition calmly to classes throughout the day. They are respectful to staff and interact appropriately. A few young people disengage from their learning at times, due to their additional support needs. This is often because learning activities do not meet their individual needs. Staff need to ensure that planned learning takes account of the strengths, needs and interests of all young people. Staff should ensure they support young people to re-engage with their learning through the consistent use of agreed strategies. A few young people display highly distressed behaviours as a result of their additional support needs. These behaviours can, at times, result in injury to themselves, other young people and staff. Staff are not adopting consistent approaches to support young people displaying challenging behaviour. Senior leaders and staff must work together to improve approaches to promoting positive relationships and behaviour across the school. There is a need to ensure that all young people are supported consistently and appropriately.
- Almost all young people access learning from subject specialist teachers such as art, music and science. Pupils in S5 and S6 would benefit from access to home economics. The majority of young people in the supported classes transition well to subject specialist classes throughout the school day. In most of these classes, lessons are well planned and young people engage appropriately. In a few subject specialist classes, staff need to differentiate learning to take better account of the individual strengths and needs of young people. In a few subject specialist classes, teachers need to improve the pace of learning.
- Young people in base classes remain in the same classroom for almost all of their learning activities. A minority of staff in base classes take appropriate account of the individual strengths and needs of young people. Staff need to ensure that all learning activities in base classes are planned and delivered to meet the needs of young people. There are too many times throughout the day when young people are not able to access appropriately challenging and purposeful learning. Young people in base classes require more opportunities to participate in meaningful learning across the school campus and local community to develop skills for life.
- Most support staff provide well considered assistance to young people. They know young people well and are sensitive to their learning and care needs. Senior leaders need to work with education authority colleagues to deploy support assistants more effectively. Staff need to support the learning and wellbeing needs of all young people better across the school. Support staff would benefit from more opportunities to develop their professional learning. They are not routinely involved in discussions with teachers about young people's learning. Senior leaders need to improve approaches to communication and collaboration between teaching staff and support staff.
- Staff work with a range of curriculum partners to enhance learning experiences for young people. As a result, a majority of young people have appropriate opportunities to learn outwith school, through participation in activities such as sailing, camping and learning in local colleges. A nearby skills project run by a community partner provides young people with opportunities to participate in a range of work placement activities to help them develop skills for life beyond school. Staff should continue to extend their work with partners in the local and wider community in order to provide further learning opportunities for young people.

- Across the school, staff have an appropriate understanding of the needs of young people. In the majority of classes, lessons are appropriately planned and delivered. Teachers use strategies and approaches, such as signs and pictures, to help young people understand their day. In the base classes, a few young people are improving their communication skills through the use of Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC). Across the school, young people need more consistent support from staff to develop their communication skills. This will help ensure that every young person can actively participate in communication exchanges. Senior leaders and partners should work alongside staff to develop a shared approach to communication to meet the diverse communication needs of all learners more effectively. This will support better all young people's ability to express themselves and contribute their preferences, choices and views.
- The majority of young people have opportunities to access digital technology through discrete learning. As a result, they are developing skills in areas such as word processing and online research. Young people do not access personal devices or computers routinely as part of their day-to-day learning. In too many classes, teachers rely too heavily on the use of worksheets. Staff should improve how digital technology and assistive technology is used across the school, with a focus on supporting young people to develop skills that will enhance their learning.
- In a few classes, teachers help young people to identify what they are learning and what they need to do to improve. Teachers' approaches to helping young people understand their learning is not consistent across the school. Senior leaders and staff should work together to agree on shared approaches and standards for the delivery of high-quality learning and teaching. Staff need to review and refresh the school learning and teaching policy and guidance, to ensure consistently high expectations across all classes.
- Teachers mainly assess young people's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing using their professional judgements. Assessment information is added to an electronic tracking system to support teachers to understand young people's progress. Teachers now need to ensure assessment approaches are more responsive to young people's progress and achievements. Assessment information should provide more detail about the individual outcomes for young people, how well they have achieved and their next steps. Assessment information should be used to inform future planning more effectively. Teachers need to develop further their understanding of national Benchmarks and standards. Senior leaders should provide further opportunities for staff to engage in moderation activities, both internally and with colleagues from other schools. This will help ensure staff have a shared understanding of young people's progress and attainment.
- Teachers plan learning in a range of ways, such as curriculum planners and additional support plans. These plans provide relevant information that detail the tasks and activities that young people will undertake. Teachers need to ensure information used to plan learning more accurately reflects the strengths and needs of young people. Teachers should be more responsive in their planning and ensure that appropriate account is taken of the progress young people are making. For example, long term targets within additional support plans do not always take account of the progress young people make at different stages throughout the year. Senior leaders should employ more robust tracking and monitoring approaches to help ensure that all young people are being appropriately challenged and making as much progress as possible.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

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

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

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

- Most young people are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. The majority of young people are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. A minority of young people are making limited progress in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Most young people are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. A minority of young people are making limited progress.

Listening and talking

- Most young people are making satisfactory progress in developing their communication and listening and talking skills. A minority of young people are capable of achieving more. Young people working at Milestones use a range of gestures, vocalisation, words and phrases to respond to familiar spoken routines and communication exchanges. Young people at early level use symbols, words and phrases to respond to simple questions. Young people at first and second levels respond to a range of questions showing understanding and can contribute ideas and views to discussions. Across the school, young people need more consistent support from staff to contribute their preferences, views and ideas. Staff should continue to work with partners to ensure all young people have a clearly identified method of communication, including those who require AAC.

Reading

- Most young people are making satisfactory progress in developing their pre-reading and reading skills. At Milestones, young people express an interest in sensory stories and show preferences for sensory objects in a familiar story. At early level, young people recognise familiar words in texts and answer simple questions about a text they have read. Most young people at first and second levels can decode unknown words and use context clues to understand texts and answer a range of comprehension questions. A few young people enjoy using class libraries and accessing the lending library to select books for personal reading. This supports them to develop their reading in an enjoyable, motivating way. Teachers should build on existing approaches to teaching reading, including using digital tools more to extend the range of texts available in class libraries and across the school.

Writing

- Most young people are making satisfactory progress in developing their writing skills. Young people at Milestones and early level explore and develop their fine motor, pre-writing, and writing skills and can use a range of tools to make patterns and form letters. Young people at early level form letters and write simple sentences. Young people at first level produce more extended pieces of writing, using punctuation and grammar accurately. Teachers should

develop further how they support young people at Milestones and into early level, to express themselves creatively using digital and alternative writing tools. This will help young people to build confidence in expressing their views and ideas using the most effective method of communication.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of young people are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. A minority of young people could be making better progress. Young people require more individualised approaches to numeracy and mathematics to ensure they have opportunities to achieve as well as possible.

Number, money and measure

- Young people working at Milestones use songs and nursery rhymes to recognise and sequence number. At early level, young people participate in daily activities which reinforce previous concepts they have learned. They complete calculations successfully using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Almost all young people understand the sequence of events through the use of visual timetables. Young people are not yet confident in using their number and measurement skills in real-life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Young people working at Milestones take part in activities and games to build their awareness of shape, position and movement. At early level, young people learn about position and use positional language correctly in the playground. At first level, young people name two-dimensional shapes and measure the perimeter of squares and rectangles. They are not yet confident in describing the features of three-dimensional objects.

Information handling

- At early and first levels, young people sort items using simple charts. They use tally charts and bar charts to organise information. Staff need to ensure that young people's development of information handling skills is more progressive as they move through the school.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders introduced a new tracking and monitoring system for literacy and numeracy in September 2023, however they do not yet have an overview of young people's progress and attainment over time in the broad general education. Attainment data provided by the school is not yet reliable. Senior leaders should continue to work alongside teachers to develop further their understanding of national Benchmarks. Senior leaders need to measure young people's progress systematically over time across all areas of the curriculum.
- Since 2021, most young people in the senior phase have gained a number of National Qualification units, predominantly from National 1 to National 4. A few young people have gained course awards. Most young people achieve awards across a range of curriculum areas including social subjects, physical education and information technology. As they continue to develop the senior phase curriculum, senior leaders and teachers should ensure young people are able to access National Qualifications at appropriate levels across all areas of the curriculum. There needs to be an increased focus on young people attaining course awards, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Staff expectations of what a minority of young people are able to attain should be more ambitious. Senior leaders and teachers need to develop a shared approach to raising all learners' attainment and achievement across the school.

- Pupil attendance at the school from 2016/17 to 2020/21 was largely in line with the national average for special schools. Attendance in 2022/23 dipped significantly and was below the national average. The school recognised there was an emerging issue with pupil attendance. A home school worker has been appointed, who is working with identified young people and families. The home school link worker has successfully supported a few learners to attend school more regularly. Young people and parents speak very highly of the home school worker's input. A minority of young people continue to have difficulty attending school regularly. Staff need to continue to develop creative, bespoke approaches to support young people to engage regularly at school.
- Almost all young people are successfully achieving a positive post-school destination. Figures show improvement from 89% in 2021/22 to 100% in 2022/23 and 88% of young people achieved a sustained destination while 10% moved into part-time employment. Staff from Skills Development Scotland support individual young people well to identify a personal learning pathway. This is helping almost all young people secure a positive transition after leaving school.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Almost all young people in the senior phase are gaining life skills and achieving awards. Over the past ten years, the school has supported 31 young people to achieve the Duke of Edinburgh Awards at bronze level and four at silver. In addition, 16 young people completed sectional awards when they have been unable to complete the full award. A few young people are achieving Sports Leader awards, enabling them to progress to volunteering in local primary schools. However, young people have limited opportunities to engage in leadership roles across the school. Staff need to provide young people with opportunities to develop their leadership skills and to be more involved in the life and work of the school. Re-establishing the student council would be a positive first step in creating such leadership roles.
- In partnership with neighbouring Cathkin High School, a few young people are completing Caritas awards. This is helping them to engage with their faith, learn new skills and give back to their community. They are learning life skills through working with the Community Cupboard in Cathkin High School. A few young people are developing customer service skills, for example by volunteering in charity shops.
- Most young people, particularly in the senior phase, are improving their life chances through attending valuable weekly sessions at a nearby skills project. They participate well in a range of learning experiences such as car valeting, serving in the café and bike-ability. Almost all young people are gaining in confidence and developing resilience. A few are securing qualifications. A few young people also progress to work placements and volunteering. Staff should continue to identify ways for young people's achievements to be accredited.
- Staff need to ensure that learners' emerging skills and attributes are consistently captured and progress measured over time. Young people should engage in more learning activities which are progressive and build on their existing achievements.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have an awareness of young people who face additional challenges as a result of poverty, such as those entitled to free school meals. Senior leaders recognise that these learners require greater support and interventions to close the poverty-related attainment gap. Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) for additional staffing to help raise attainment in literacy and numeracy, and improve pupil attendance. The school's targeted interventions, such as music therapy, are impacting positively on a few young people's

attendance, attainment and wellbeing. Senior leaders now need to measure more effectively the impact of all PEF interventions on young people's attainment, achievements and wellbeing. In particular, senior leaders need to measure how successfully PEF interventions are helping reduce the poverty-related attainment gap.

Other relevant evidence

- School leadership at all levels requires improvement. Senior leaders should develop more robust processes to monitor school performance with a clear focus on improving young people's attainment, achievement and wellbeing. They need to have more clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They need to work closely with all members of the school community to strengthen relationships and improve the school culture.
- Senior leaders need to review their approaches to communicating with all members of the school community, notably staff and parents. They need to ensure that communication is regular, clear and effective.
- The newly introduced base class model requires further development. Staff need to ensure that all young people have access to curriculum progressions, to support them to make the best possible progress in their communication, wellbeing and learning. Senior leaders and staff should review the curriculum rationale for this cohort of learners. This will help enable teachers and staff to develop a shared understanding of what a relevant and meaningful curriculum looks like for all learners.
- The school needs to ensure that all young people receive their entitlement to two hours of quality physical education in line with national expectations.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. Several areas for improvement have been agreed with the school.

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.