

Summarised inspection findings

The New School Butterstone, Perthshire

21 August 2018

Key contextual information

In May 2018, Scottish Ministers requested HM Inspectors conduct a special inspection of The New School Butterstone in accordance with section 66(1) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (“the 1980 Act”).

Furthermore - in accordance with section 66(1AA)(b) of the 1980 Act – Scottish Ministers have requested that HM Inspectors inspect and report on the following.

- The quality of the school’s provision in relation to safeguarding and child protection and in particular in relation to:
 - policies and practices regarding care plans;
 - risk assessments and risk management plans;
 - the school’s child and adult protection policies and their implementation;
 - staff implementation and knowledge of the aforementioned policies and good practice; and the quality of leadership and governance, especially in relation to safeguarding and child protection.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

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

- The recently appointed, experienced head of school is well respected by the school community and is providing a renewed sense of direction. He is clearly committed to ensuring that young people achieve success and are provided with a nurturing environment to learn. Since joining the school on a consultative basis in January, he has undertaken a review of the care and education provision on offer at The New School Butterstone (NSB), involving staff and young people in the process. Following this review, he has rightly identified areas in the education provision requiring immediate improvement. These include the breadth of the broad general education (BGE) curriculum on offer and the systems and processes in place to assess, track and monitor young people's progress.
- NSB's vision and aims centres on meeting the holistic and educational needs of young people and helping them to be equipped for life in the 21st century. These are relevant to the context of the school but are not yet a strong feature of the life of the school and have not been refreshed for a number of years. Led by the head of school, NSB needs to revisit their vision, values and aims involving all members of the school community. The resulting vision, values and aims should have greater influence on important areas of the school such as positive behaviour management, the curriculum, approaches to learning and teaching and building young people's skills for life, learning and work.
- Staff throughout NSB are committed to meeting the needs of young people through self-reflection of their practice and collegiate discussions. Staff at all levels participate in regular professional dialogue aimed at better meeting the educational needs of young people. Their opinions play a major part in determining next steps in whole school affairs including curriculum development and timetabling. Staff are responsible for leading on developments within their own curriculum area. In recent times, teaching staff have developed a range of learning programmes at the senior phase. This has led to young people being able to attain a greater number of National Qualifications from National 4 up to Advanced Higher. Led by senior managers, the school should take this further by focussing professional dialogue on identified school improvement priorities beyond National Qualifications. Given the younger profile of learners starting at the school, more focus needs to be placed in planning and delivering a progressive and coherent BGE that meets the needs and entitlements of these young people. As identified by the head of school, the current BGE curriculum requires development and needs to take fuller account of the seven principles of curriculum design. In taking forward future improvement priorities, all staff should be encouraged to lead and contribute to whole school priorities instead of focussing solely on their own curriculum area. Newly delegated responsibility should include the systematic review and evaluation of any new approaches and initiatives.

- The Board of Governors is clearly committed to providing help and support to the school. The governing body works in close partnership with the school, receiving detailed reports of the work of the school and engaging in all areas of school improvement alongside providing advice and scrutiny on finance and business matters. They are clearly interested in young people's progress and their achievements.
- Young people participate in worthwhile learning activities aimed at developing leadership skills including participating in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award residential outings, giving visitors a tour of the school and coaching younger learners in sporting activities such as football and fitness training. There is now a need to build on this by identifying and developing creative ways for young people to participate in a wider range of leadership activities. Young people should have a greater influence in changing and improving aspects of school life in areas such as curriculum development and learning and teaching approaches.
- There is clear evidence of school improvement priorities having a positive impact on young people. In recent years, the school has successfully introduced a number of new personal achievement learning activities, increased the range of National Qualifications on offer at the senior phase and developed new initiatives to support young people to build confidence and develop skills for life and work. This has resulted in improvements in young people's attainment especially the number and range of National Qualification course and unit awards achieved by young people. Most young people have also successfully moved on to a positive, sustained post-school destination including higher education, training and employment.
- In the past year, whole school improvement has not been taken forward in a purposeful way. There has been little progress with identified areas for improvement. This has been strongly influenced by staff absence. In recent months, the principal teacher has taken on additional responsibilities. He has revised the curriculum and amended the timetable in order to better meet the interests of young people. This has had a positive impact on learner engagement. The school now needs to review the curriculum further to ensure it is coherent, progressive and provides sufficient challenge for young people. Under the direction and guidance of the head of school and head of education, supported by the Board, it is important that there is a renewed focus on whole school improvement.
- The school is aware that there is a need to develop more effective whole-school tracking and monitoring of young people's progress with their learning across all areas of the curriculum, particularly at the BGE. There is a need to raise expectations of what young people are able to achieve. Interrogation of more valuable data on young people's progress would better help determine whether curriculum developments and changes to learning and teaching approaches are having a positive impact on young people's attainment and achievement across the whole school. Reliable data would also help prepare young people when they are moving from the BGE into the senior phase.
- Education staff participate in a small number of worthwhile career-long professional learning opportunities with particular focus on curriculum development and how to better meet the increasingly diverse needs of young people attending the school. However, all staff would greatly benefit from increased access to more individual and collective training opportunities including sharing good practice with colleagues from other schools, discussing pedagogy, participating in moderation activities and visiting other special schools.

- The school has a shared understanding of the socio-economic factors affecting young people across the school and the importance of positive relationships and a caring ethos. This is helping many young people to successfully re-engage with education. Staff ably support young people and their families to overcome potential barriers to learning including social and emotional needs, family circumstances and periods of prolonged interrupted learning. The school should better measure the positive impact this has on young people's outcomes through improved monitoring of young people's progress in terms of attendance, engagement and participation.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

weak

This indicator focuses on the wide range of duties required of all staff and partners to ensure that all children and young people are safe, well cared for and enabled to flourish. This indicator looks to how the school takes account of statutory requirements in relation to child protection to ensure the needs of all learners are met. Safeguarding all children and young people requires strong partnerships to be established between the school and its local community. The themes are:

- arrangements for safeguarding, including child protection
- arrangements to ensure wellbeing
- national guidance and legislation

- Young people report that they feel safe in the school and staff know them well. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of young people's strengths and any issues that may cause anxiety. Young people identify their relationships with staff as a positive aspect of the school. They know that they can talk to staff if they have worries or concerns and can identify who they would talk to.

Policies and practices regarding care plans

- The school has too many different kinds of plans in place which leads to an overly bureaucratic process.
- A variety of plans, including care plans, risk assessments and behaviour crisis management plans, are in place to support the needs of young people. They provide information as to how staff are promoting the wellbeing of young people. Plans are updated to reflect any changes in relation to the needs of young people. Young people can identify how the school supports their wellbeing. For example, they told us that staff talk to them about their mental health and how to deal with any anxieties they may have about their education.
- Plans are not always individualised and do not always demonstrate how they will improve outcomes for young people. For example, staff should consider how wellbeing targets within individualised educational plans (IEPs) could be improved by taking better account of the social and emotional needs of young people that have been identified in other plans. Plans which use the wellbeing indicators can be too generic and do not always reflect the specific strengths and needs of young people.

Risk assessments and risk management plans

- Risk assessments do not fully reflect the specific risks of young people, particularly in relation to information and communication technology (ICT). Strategies to minimise risk in relation to ICT were identified for every child but were too generic in young people's risk assessments. For some young people, potential issues with ICT were highlighted in other plans. The school should continue to streamline plans in order that all identified issues and strategies are in young people's risk assessments.
- The recently developed Communication Passports detail young people's individual strengths and support needs well.

- A number of incidents of young people exhibiting challenging behaviour are associated with the use of ICT. Further analysis of these incidents would help staff consider how best to organise resources and timetables to reduce the risk of future conflict. Particular consideration should be given to the arrangements for young people to access the computer suite during breaks in the school day.
- The school has put in place software which helps prevent young people from accessing inappropriate information on the internet. Senior leaders, staff and young people should now work together to put in place further safeguards which will allow young people to use social media and the internet safely whilst preventing access to inappropriate information.
- Senior managers, together with staff, should analyse all incidents of challenging behaviour to identify any antecedents that are leading to regular issues for individuals or groups of young people. Regular scrutiny of incidents will also help determine if young people are requiring any additional support.

The school's child and adult protection policies and their implementation

- The school must improve their systems for reporting and recording child protection and safeguarding concerns, in line with national guidance. Procedures for reporting concerns should be made more visible across the school grounds for staff, learners, parents and visitors to easily see and understand.
- A recent newsletter to parents informs them of training undertaken by staff in partnership with an external agency. The information given to parents highlights the school's future plans in relation to developing further their approaches to safeguarding and child protection.
- The current child protection policy does not take account of recent legislation and national guidance such as the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). It does not reflect issues such as child sexual exploitation or risks associated with radicalisation. A number of policies in place to protect young people from harm are dated and need to take account of current national guidance. Senior managers have recognised the need to review and improve child protection and safeguarding policies and practices.
- The Board of Governors should also be involved in the development of policies and procedures to ensure it is able to monitor, support and challenge arrangements for child protection and safeguarding.
- The school needs to ensure that self-evaluation activities include a focus on safeguarding and child protection in order to identify what is working well and highlight areas for improvement. As part of safeguarding and child protection self-evaluation activities, staff should engage with national guidance related to exclusions, anti-bullying, child protection procedures and staff professional learning.
- Through the use of newsletters, the school has acknowledged the need to share with parents the school's approaches to child protection. The school should continue as planned to engage with the Parent Council on child protection approaches.

- The school now needs to further develop learner participation including more explicit systems for young people to make a complaint and access support and advocacy from organisations outwith the school. There is also scope to further involve young people in taking responsibility and in decision making.

Staff implementation and knowledge of the aforementioned policies and good practice

- Staff have recently participated in child protection training delivered by an external organisation. As a result, staff say the training has helped to further develop their understanding of child protection in relation to the needs of young people at the school. Senior managers with additional child protection responsibilities, especially the child protection coordinator, require further child protection training at level two or above.
- Staff across the school are aware of their responsibilities in keeping young people safe. They demonstrate knowledge of young people's strengths and needs. They have good relationships with young people and learners report feeling safe and cared for.
- As new policies and procedures are developed, a programme of staff training should be delivered to ensure all staff are familiar with procedures.
- Staff now need to continue to develop the curriculum and ensure there is a clear focus on improving wellbeing outcomes and helping young people build resilience. For example, young people could not identify how the school was helping them in developing an understanding of sexual health and relationships or the dangers of substance misuse. It is acknowledged that recent staffing issues have contributed to shortfalls in this area and the school already has plans to help address this issue.

1.3 Leadership of change

Theme 1: Governance framework

- In line with national guidance, the Board of Governors understands its responsibilities to provide sound governance including the provision of high quality services for young people and a duty of care for all members of the school community. Commendably, the Board of Governors ensures that all young people and staff have access to a counselling service to support any anxiety or feelings of loss or grief. This has been beneficial to a number of individuals especially given the number of challenges faced by young people and staff in the last eighteen months. The Board of Governors also arranged for an external agency to provide staff training in safeguarding and child protection.
- The Board of Governors monitors the school's approaches to some aspects of safeguarding and child protection. It has an understanding of processes and monitors child protection concerns and referrals. The Board now needs to apply further scrutiny to ensure the school's arrangements for child protection and safeguarding are robust and result in high quality policies and practices. When recruiting new members to the Board of Governors, the school should consider appointing a member with a history and knowledge of child protection and safeguarding.
- The Board of Governors and head of school now need to provide more support and challenge to education managers in terms of continuous improvement in education and their management of key responsibilities. Education managers have established positive relationships with parents and communicate with them effectively. They now need to adopt similar high standards of communication with other stakeholders including better reporting of learner progress and the organisation and delivery of review meetings in a timeous manner.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Strong, trusting relationships between staff and young people are evident in everyday interactions across the school. Staff know individual young people well and treat them with care and respect. Young people say they are happy, safe and feel comfortable approaching staff. This creates a nurturing environment which supports most young people, who have previously experienced significant disruption in their learning, to make progress with their education. There is a strong sense of belonging and most young people express clearly they are proud of their school. Overall, parents are happy with how well the school is supporting their child's education.
- Most young people improve their confidence from participating in a wide range of curriculum activities. Young people also spoke highly of how staff support them to overcome any anxieties they have about engaging with education and working with their peers. The school now needs to introduce more specialised interventions to support young people on a personalised basis. Many young people would benefit greatly from targeted interventions on, for example, understanding trauma and anxiety, coping with change and loss and building and sustaining friendships and relationships.
- As recognised by the head of school, more streamlined planning and recording processes, including improved application of the wellbeing indicators, will help staff to monitor and evidence young people's progress better. It will also help young people to be more aware of their personal targets, including those related to wellbeing, and what they need to do to improve. School staff should be more proactive in arranging regular reviews to discuss the progress of young people.

The school provided the following additional evidence to support the inspection findings:

- Examples of Communication Passports – new, positive step to identify and share young people’s strengths and support needs written in child-friendly language.
- Newsletter – shared with parents that child protection training has taken place and that further actions are required.
- Examples of young people’s individual support plans.
- A range of emails highlighting discussions with partners regarding young people’s progress and support needs.
- Health and wellbeing plans linked to Curriculum for Excellence.
- Example of ‘What works for me’ care plan for a young person.
- Key worker form.
- Examples of individualised educational plans.
- Flyer offering training to parents from an external agency.
- Transition plan to support a young person who recently moved on from the school.

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.