

Summarised inspection findings

Forrester High School

The City of Edinburgh Council

19 March 2024

Key contextual information

School Name: Forrester High School
Council: The City of Edinburgh
SEED number: 5532736
Roll (January 2024): 794 young people

Forrester High School is a non-denominational secondary school serving an area of West Edinburgh. It has four associated primary schools. The school is based on a shared campus with St Augustine's High School.

The acting headteacher has been in post since October 2023. He is supported by three deputy headteachers, a senior development officer and a business manager. The school has experienced challenges with staff absence, turnover and recruitment in recent years. This has improved in the current academic year.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average. Exclusions are generally above the national average. There was an increase in the number of exclusions during 2022/23. This is reducing in the current academic year 2023/24.

In February 2023, 21.2% of pupils were registered for free school meals. In September 2022, 21.2% of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In September 2022, the school reported that 67% of pupils had additional support needs. This is above local authority and national averages.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

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

- Most staff foster respectful and positive relationships with young people. The school values of 'Together we Respect, Believe and Achieve' help to underpin a calm and caring climate for learning. Most young people are eager to engage in the life and work of the school. Teachers now need to build on this learning environment by ensuring they have consistently high expectations and are more aspirational for all learners.
- Most young people participate well in classroom activities. In a minority of lessons, young people are active participants in their learning, for example in well-structured pair and group discussion activities. Staff should continue to develop their use of creative and relevant contexts for learning. In a majority of lessons, learning is overly teacher-led which results in young people being passive. When this happens, a few young people disengage from learning and begin to distract others, impacting negatively on the learning of their peers.
- Senior leaders and staff are working collaboratively to improve learning and teaching and learners' experiences across the school. They created the 'Forrester in Action' learning and teaching policy which provides teachers with a clear framework for lessons. This is supporting improvements in most teachers' use of consistent classroom routines and structures. Staff are engaging in a range of helpful professional learning to improve their practice. Staff should continue to work together to improve the quality and consistency of learner experiences across the school.
- In almost all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. A majority of teachers support young people to understand the links between prior and current learning. Most teachers share learning intentions and success criteria at the beginning of a lesson. However, in a majority of lessons these are too focused on the tasks to be undertaken rather than sharing the purpose of learning. As a result, young people do not consistently understand the purpose of learning. Teachers should improve their use of success criteria, including opportunities for young people to co-create them. This will help all young people to be able to reflect on and understand the knowledge and skills they are developing through their learning.
- In most lessons, teachers use questioning appropriately to check young people's understanding and knowledge. In a minority of lessons, teachers use high-quality questioning to support young people to think deeply about their learning and to use their higher-order thinking skills. This practice should be adopted more widely by all teachers.
- Most teachers demonstrate awareness of young people's additional support needs. They now need to use information and support strategies more consistently to inform the planning of young people's learning. In a minority of departments, staff use differentiated materials and activities to ensure all young people can achieve success in their learning. This includes more

challenging work for young people who need to extend their learning. Senior leaders identify appropriately the need to improve the pace and challenge of learning experienced by all young people. This will help all young people to remain meaningfully engaged in their learning.

- Teachers in most departments use digital technology well to support learners' engagement. Young people access content and resources easily through digital platforms using their individual device. Young people use digital technology confidently to complete online tasks, to take notes and images, and to conduct research.
- A majority of teachers use a range of assessment strategies appropriately to check learners' understanding throughout the lesson. A minority of teachers use plenary discussions effectively to review the progress being made by learners. Teachers should continue to extend their use of formative assessment, particularly within the Broad General Education (BGE). Young people would benefit from more opportunities to do self and peer assessments. This would support them to develop as more independent learners.
- Almost all teachers continue to develop the assessment evidence used to inform judgements relating to the achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Staff are building confidence in applying national standards as a result of appropriate moderation activities. These activities mainly focus on verification processes. Most teachers now need to develop their understanding of the moderation cycle further and use this to inform planning for learning, teaching and assessment better. All staff should continue to engage in a range of moderation activities that support their understanding of the progress being made by young people.
- In the senior phase, teachers design assessments that are well-matched to the standards associated with National Qualification (NQ) courses. A minority of staff are Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) appointees and support a shared understanding of national standards across the school.
- A few teachers use digital platforms effectively to review learners' work and provide ongoing guidance and support. This encourages young people to take increasing responsibility for extending their own learning. Across the school, young people require more specific and individual feedback to support their understanding of what they are doing well and areas for development. Most teachers should continue to develop the consistency and quality of feedback offered to young people. They should also ensure feedback results in young people having realistic and ambitious targets, and to be clear on their next steps in learning. Young people would benefit from targets being recorded and shared with parents systematically. This will ensure parents have the information they need to support their child's learning.
- Staffs' approaches to monitoring and tracking the progress of young people in the BGE is too variable. Senior leaders need to support staff to develop consistent and systematic approaches to gathering evidence of the progress of all learners at this stage. In the senior phase, tracking processes are better developed and are having a greater impact. The processes allow staff to identify young people who are underachieving and put in place classroom strategies to support them with their learning. Staff now need to use the monitoring and tracking data more effectively to inform subsequent planning of learning, teaching and assessment.

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.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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

- Whilst there are aspects of strengths in the school's approaches to raising attainment and achievement, important weaknesses remain. Staff need to improve the attainment of young people across the school. In the BGE, senior leaders need to develop a strategic overview of young people's attainment over time. In the senior phase, there is a significant need to improve the breadth and quality of passes in National Qualifications (NQs), including in English and mathematics. Young people generally attain below the level of their peers across Scotland.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

BGE

- In 2022/23, almost all young people attained third level CfE in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. Most achieved CfE fourth level. Attainment in fourth level CfE literacy has improved over the past five years. There is no pattern of improvement of attainment in fourth level CfE numeracy over the same period. Teachers in English engage in helpful moderation which supports the reliability of teacher judgements. A recently appointed curriculum lead of maths is improving the tracking of learner's numeracy skills and has introduced moderation of standards in numeracy. This is supporting improvements in the robustness of professional judgements.
- Staff use a range of approaches to improve young people's literacy and numeracy skills. A few young people access well-planned targeted interventions. A cluster transition teacher works with primaries offering transition support to children at risk of not achieving appropriate numeracy milestones. The development and assessment of literacy and numeracy as a responsibility of all is limited across the school. Staff need to develop this as it has the potential to help learners develop skills needed to progress with their learning in all curricular areas.

Senior Phase

Literacy and numeracy (leavers)

- The school has maintained high levels of performance for leavers achieving Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF) level 4 and 5 or better in literacy from 2017/18 till 2021/22. Almost all leavers achieved SCQF level 5 or better from 2018/19 till 2021/22. This was significantly much higher than the virtual comparator (VC). A minority of leavers achieved SCQF level 6 in the same period. There is a declining pattern to this measure which was significantly lower than the VC from 2019/20 to 2021/22.
- The school has maintained high levels of performance for leavers achieving SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy from 2017/18 till 2021/22. The number of leavers achieving SCQF level 5 or better has improved from around half of leavers in 2018/19 to a majority in 2021/22. This is generally in line with the VC. There is no pattern of improvement in the number of leavers

achieving SCQF level 6, with only a few attaining the award in 2020/21 and 2021/22. This was significantly lower than the VC in 2020/21.

- There is a notable difference between the success young people have in achieving both literacy and numeracy SCQF level 5 through units when compared to the percentage who achieve this through a course award.
- Leavers with additional support needs achieved consistently well at SCQF level 4 or better in literacy and numeracy from 2019/20 to 2021/22. This success continued for these leavers at SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. The attainment of leavers with additional support needs at SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy has improved from a few in 2017/18 to a majority in 2021/22. Staff now need to increase the attainment of leavers with additional support needs at SCQF level 6 in literacy and numeracy.

Literacy (cohorts)

- At S4, almost all young people attained SCQF level 5 or better in four of the last five years. This was significantly much higher than the VC throughout this period. By S5, based on the S5 roll, performance at SCQF level 6 is weak over the five-year period, with performance significantly lower or much lower than the VC for selected years. By S6, based on the S6 roll, a majority of young people attained SCQF level 6 over the five-year period. This is in line with the VC, apart from 2021/22 when it was significantly much lower. As young people move through the school, the performance at SCQF level 5 or better is not converting to strong performance at SCQF level 6.

Numeracy (cohorts)

- At S4, a majority of young people attained SCQF level 5 or better in the last two years, which was significantly higher than the VC in 2021/22. There is a notable difference between the success young people have in achieving numeracy through units when compared to the percentage who achieve this through a course award. As a result, as young people move through the school their performance at SCQF level 6 is weak. By S5, based on the S5 roll, there is no pattern of improvement at SCQF level 6 over the past five years. A few young people attained SCQF level 6 in 2012/22, which was significantly lower than the VC. By S6, based on the S6 roll, a minority of young people attained SCQF level 6 in the last five years. This is generally in line with the VC, apart from 2020/21 when it was significantly lower.

National Qualifications

- Teachers need to support young people to improve the quality of passes at National 5 and at Higher in English and maths, including applications of maths. Attainment at these levels is almost always significantly below national figures. Staff need to continue to support improvements in young people's literacy and numeracy skills. They identify young people's insufficient level of skills as being a potential barrier to success across the curriculum.

Attainment over time

BGE

- Senior leaders presented variations in their data relating to achievement of CfE levels for curriculum areas outwith literacy and numeracy. They now need to ensure greater clarity when differentiating between progress within a level and achievement of a level. The latest data provided by the school indicates that in 2022/23, by the end of S3, a majority of learners achieved third level in curricular areas. This data is not based on robust and reliable assessment information.

- Staff should continue to develop further their BGE courses to better reflect national standards and meet the needs of all young people fully. They should ensure all young people have the opportunity to develop the appropriate knowledge and skills associated with the BGE before progressing to NQs. Senior leaders should improve their strategic overview of how young people attain in the BGE. This will support planning for appropriate learning pathways as learners progress to the senior phase.

Senior Phase

- Senior leaders and staff need to significantly improve the attainment of young people in the senior phase. Senior leaders identify factors that impact on attainment. The school attendance data is in line with national averages. However, senior leaders identify repeated late coming as impacting on a minority of young people's success. They also identify learners leaving school during S4 and S5, and staffing, which has improved this year, as impacting attainment.
- Senior leaders should develop a strategy which outlines everyone's roles and responsibilities in raising attainment and the interventions to be used when a young person is off track.
- When compared using average complementary tariff points, the attainment of leavers from 2017/18 and 2022/23 is below that of the VC. The attainment of the lowest 20% of leavers is in line with the VC. The middle 60% and highest 20% consistently perform significantly lower than the VC.
- At S4, the performance of the lowest 20%, middle 60% and highest 20% is generally in line with the VC. By S5, based on the S5 roll, the lowest 20% is generally in line with the VC. For the middle 60% and highest 20%, there is no pattern of improvement and has been significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC over the past 5 years. By S6, based on the S6 roll, the lowest 20% is generally in line with the VC. For the middle 60%, there is no pattern of improvement. For the highest 20%, the performance has been significantly lower than the VC in three of the past five year, but was in line with the VC in 2022/23.

Breadth and depth

- Senior leaders and staff have been reviewing the senior phase curriculum and introducing a greater range of SCQF level 5 and 6 courses. Senior leaders should continue to review the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of learners and supports raised attainment. Senior leaders plan to increase the number of NQ courses studied by learners in S4 from six to seven, offering a wider range of opportunities for success.
- At S4, the number of young people attaining one or more to four or more courses at SCQF level 4 or better is generally in line with the VC over the five-year period. However, there is no pattern of improvement in the number of young people achieving five or more to seven or more courses at SCQF level 4 or better. This is generally significantly lower than the VC. There is a declining pattern in the number of learners achieving three or more to six or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better. This also includes those achieving higher quality passes. These measures are generally significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC over the five-year period.
- By S5, most young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better in the last five years. This is in line with the VC. The percentage of young people attaining three or more to five or more awards at SCQF level 5A is significantly lower or much lower than the VC over the five-year period. A minority of young people attained two or more or three or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C over the past five years. This is significantly lower or much lower than the VC over the period. There is no pattern of improvement in these measures.

- By S6, a majority of young people attained five or more qualifications at SCQF level 5A or better in 2022/23, which is an improvement from a minority in the previous four years. A majority of young people achieved one or more qualifications, and a minority achieved two or more qualifications, at SCQF level 6A or better over the five-year period. This is in line with the VC. There is no pattern of improvement in the number of young people attaining awards at SCQF level 7C and 7A. In 2022/23, young people attaining one or more and two or more awards at SCQF level 7C was significantly lower than the VC. Young people attaining one or more award at SCQF level 7A was significantly much lower than the VC.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Most young people feel valued and included by staff's approaches to celebrating their achievements. This includes assemblies, praise letters, displays and award ceremonies. Young people participate in a range of activities which support them to develop skills. These include pupil groups, clubs and school shows. A majority of young people are developing confidence and interpersonal skills. Staff are beginning to capture and collate young people's achievements through a new tracking system. This is providing staff with helpful data on young people's achievements in and outwith school. They should continue to use this information to identify and encourage those not benefitting from involvement. Young people need more support to articulate the skills they develop through their achievements.
- An increasing number of young people gain accreditation for their participation in achievement activities. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Scholars programme and Young Enterprise. All young people in S3 are part of the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative which develops their sense of community and responsibility. A few young people in the senior phase develop their leadership skills through involvement in wellbeing programmes. These include as Mentors in Violence Prevention and Mental Health Ambassadors.
- Staff have developed strong links with partners and work effectively with the local and wider community. For example, the charity Green Team run successful programmes where a few young people learn about conservation and the environment. These roles are developing self-esteem for those who participate and developing their practical skills.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders have used the Pupil Equity Fund to recruit a senior development officer as well as two pupil support officers. These staff have led a range of interventions seeking to close the poverty-related attainment gap. They have introduced successful interventions to improve young people's wellbeing which are beginning to have positive results, such as helping a few young to secure positive destinations.
- The Attainment Hub provides additional support for targeted individuals and groups of young people. This helps them to attend school for periods of time and to achieve qualifications they might not achieve otherwise. Interventions also include, for example, a well-attended breakfast club and the Reconnect programme. The breakfast club provides young people with a safe space to start their day and helps them to develop positive relationships with peers and staff. The Reconnect programme helps a few young people to reconnect with school and improve their attendance. Staff recently introduced a mentoring programme for young people in the senior phase. This is beginning to help a few young people focus on their studies and achieve more effectively.
- Almost all school leavers go to a positive destination, which is in line with the VC. Most young people stay on at school from S4 to S5, with a minority staying till the end of S6. Around half of leavers go to higher or further education. A significant minority leave to go to employment.

- Whilst there have been some improvements for a few individual school leavers living within SIMD one to three, the attainment of all leavers in 2021/22 is significantly much lower or significantly lower when compared to young people living in similar deciles across Scotland. The attainment of leavers living within SIMD deciles one, six and seven is often significantly much lower or significantly lower than that of young people in similar deciles across Scotland.

Quality of provision of Special Unit (contributes to school evaluations)

The Enhanced Support Base (ESB) is a single class special unit located in the support for learning department of Forrester High School. The ESB provides individualised programmes of learning for young people with significant additional support needs. At the time of inspection, nine young people were in the ESB. All young people are in the BGE. Young people requiring additional support in the mainstream provision also join classes and break times in the ESB in order to help meet an identified need.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Young people benefit from a positive learning environment and a calm, settled culture for learning in the ESB. Staff have developed caring and nurturing relationships with young people and families. This supports most young people to attend school regularly, often after extended periods of interrupted learning. Young people feel welcome, valued and supported in their learning. They are highly respectful of one another and are building meaningful friendships. Young people speak very positively about their experience in the ESB.
- Staff are dedicated to getting it right for young people and provide learning experiences which are consistently motivating for most learners. Most young people enjoy attending the ESB and engage purposefully in learning activities that suit their needs and interests. Most young people find it particularly motivating to engage in practical activities in subjects including science, art and physical education. Young people work well in group and individual tasks and activities. Staff should ensure that all learning experiences are age-appropriate and provide suitable levels of challenge for all young people.
- Staff are using digital technology effectively to enhance young people's learning. They use the interactive whiteboard in the ESB very well to support young people with transitions, managing change well when necessary. As planned, staff should identify more learning activities using outdoor spaces and the local community.
- In most classes, young people have an understanding of the purpose of their learning and how they can be successful. They are aware of their individual learning targets for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as appropriate. All young people have individualised educational programmes which provide a comprehensive overview of young people's strengths and needs. Each young person has personalised strategies in place to support them to engage in learning and regulate their emotions. Staff in the ESB should work closely with mainstream colleagues to ensure shared approaches and strategies to help meet young people's needs are applied consistently in both the ESB and mainstream classes.
- Staff carry out detailed summative assessments when young people begin their placement at the ESB and systematically thereafter to help measure progress. In addition, staff also use a range of formative assessment approaches effectively to assess young people's understanding of learning. The resulting assessment information identifies clearly any gaps in learning and areas of literacy and numeracy requiring support. Staff also identify factors impacting upon a young person's wellbeing and potential barriers to learning. As a result, teachers are provided with a detailed assessment of young people's holistic needs.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- Young people's progress and attainment is expressed in 'overall' statements rather than for specific cohorts. This is because of the very small numbers of young people attending the ESB.

- Overall, most young people are making good progress towards individualised targets in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics.
- In literacy and English, young people listen well to others and express their views with increasing confidence. They are reading simple texts fluently. Young people show an awareness of books and are able to identify stories they like. Young people would benefit from more opportunities to write extended pieces of writing. In numeracy and mathematics, young people are building their understanding of number, time and shape. They need more support with fractions.
- Most young people are making good progress with their learning and engagement over time. However, a few young people could achieve more. Senior leaders and staff should strengthen their analysis of data and evidence of young people's progress over time. They should focus on improving young people's attainment and progress across all curriculum areas.
- Young people participate purposefully in a wide range of valuable personal achievement activities in the ESB. These include coffee mornings and the ESB Oscars' celebration. Young people also access whole-school initiatives including fundraising events and activities centred around children's rights. Through participating in personal achievement activities, young people are building skills in working with others, communication and citizenship. Young people often receive accreditation for their achievements including the Saltire Award and John Muir Award. However, most young people do not yet appreciate the skills they are developing through their personal achievements. Staff should support young people to recognise the skills they are developing, notably those skills for life, learning and work. As planned, older young people need to be supported to engage in more Careers Education and participate in meaningful work placements.
- Senior leaders and staff have a detailed understanding of the range and complexity of young people's needs in the ESB. They provide bespoke, equitable support which helps young people to attend school and engage with learning. Young people in the ESB participate well in whole school PEF funded initiatives such as Gold and Gray, and leadership programmes.

Other information relating to the ESB

- Staff are highly attentive to the wellbeing needs of all young people in the ESB. There is an increasing focus on inclusion between the ESB and the wider school as a whole. Most young people are successfully accessing learning experiences, often alongside their mainstream peers. Young people enjoy engaging in these valuable opportunities, participating well and accessing a wider curriculum. Staff should continue to identify creative ways for all young people in the ESB to access mainstream classes and be more involved in wider school life.
- A few young people do not currently attend school for the full day. Senior leaders and staff need to ensure that no young people in the ESB are disadvantaged due to their personal circumstances. In line with national guidance, any part-time programmes should be a short-term measure with clear plans in place to support young people to access a full-time bespoke education programme.

Other relevant evidence

- The school library is used well to support a range of learners in both subject-based learning and in developing their wellbeing. The library also provides useful learning opportunities for young people to encourage enjoyment of reading. Young people in S1 are asked to identify their likes and dislikes, and support to identify books at the correct level for them. Positively, the school librarian ensures books represent diversity, such as including books for those who are neuro diverse.
- Almost all staff and partners have a clear understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school. Staff have a good understanding of equity across the school community. They work to remove financial barriers to help young people participate fully in school life.
- Staff are mindful of the wellbeing needs of all young people. They ensure young people can access a school counsellor if required. Staff also help a few young people to learn more independently through a recently established dyslexia support group. Staff and young people organise a foodbank collection to support the wellbeing of others within the community. This allows a few young people to develop citizenship skills.
- Staff across the school support a wide range of initiatives to promote equality, equity and inclusion. These include staff displaying equalities pledges outside their classrooms, indicating their commitment to provide safe and welcoming learning spaces.
- 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, and with the school meals provider.

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.