Summarised inspection findings

Bell Baxter High School

Fife Council

16 June 2020

School name   Bell Baxter High School
Council: Fife Council
SEED number: 5426332
Roll (Sep 2018): 1390

Key contextual information

Attendance is generally in line the national average for years where comparable figures are available. Attendance has risen from 90.7 per cent in 16/17 to 91.0 per cent in 17/18 and 92.0 per cent for 2018/19. Exclusions are generally in line the national average and decreased from 2016/17 to 2018/19. In February 2019, 8.7 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals. In September 2018, 2.7 per cent of pupils lived in the 20 per cent most deprived datazones in Scotland. In September 2018, the school reported that 32 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

The school has 18 associated primary schools, which vary in size from small schools with multi-stage classes to a large school with a roll of around 500. These schools are spread over a wide geographical area.

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 headteacher has been in post for a year and a half. She is determined to bring about positive change throughout the school. She is focusing appropriately on raising attainment and ensuring positive outcomes for young people. Senior leaders ensure self-evaluation and the improvement agenda are informed by a strong understanding of the school context, including through the analysis of high quality data. Staff are developing further their confidence in using information about the social context, such as socio-economic factors, to support planning and decision-making.

- Staff, the Parent Council and a few young people were involved in the development of the recently launched vision and values. Following consultation, a small group of stakeholders participated in a workshop to agree the language used. Whilst this was a helpful approach, further extending the consultation with all stakeholders would develop their sense of ownership of the vision and values. Almost all of the school community are positive about the potential of the vision and values to underpin the work of the school.

- The school's vision is based on the motivating statement "the future is in our hands". The three key values are Excellence, Togetherness and Curiosity. School leaders are developing a strategy to embed the vision and values to support a shared understanding of purpose, ethos and direction. The headteacher should continue, as planned, to ensure the language and underlying themes are meaningful for all. Staff should also develop the use of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to support this work.

- The headteacher, supported by senior leaders, is driving forward significant change. All members of the school community acknowledge the need for these changes. The pace of change set by the headteacher has been required due to the need to improve outcomes for young people. This, however, has led to a majority of staff and more than a few parents feeling the volume and pace of change has been too fast. There is now a need for all staff to work together to more effectively secure much needed improvements. Senior leaders should ensure the pace and volume of change allows sufficient time to embed strategies and build capacity in faculties to support cultural change.

- The headteacher is supported by four depute headteachers who bring a range of experience to their leadership roles. One of these posts is currently supported by pupil equity funding (PEF). This recently established senior leadership team is beginning to work together positively to support strategic and operational responsibilities. The senior leadership team has led the school well through a management restructure. The school management structure is now more in line with similar schools across Scotland. The changes to staffing have resulted in a period of challenge for staff as they adapt to the new structure. The headteacher is determined to address the challenges resulting from this to ensure that staff are equipped to improve outcomes for young people.

- Senior leaders identified three priority areas for school improvement. These are ensuring high quality, consistent learning and teaching, supporting all learners to achieve and raising attainment and achievement. Senior leaders need to ensure other key priorities are also being taken forward. These include, for example, strategies for Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and embedding the 3 -18 Career Education Standard (CES) entitlements.

- Senior leaders are using the school's allocation of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to support school improvement priorities. Most funds have been used to appoint staff to address identified equity gaps. These staff focus on employing data effectively to measure outcomes, removing barriers to learning and improving participation of targeted young people. Funds also support professional learning focusing on learning and teaching and building relationships. A number of the PEF funded interventions are beginning to have a positive impact on targeted young people.

- Staff have adopted a common approach to improvement planning. This is supporting clarity and a focus for improvement actions. School and faculty improvement plans (SIP/FIPs) support staff well to evaluate the progress of faculties using How good is our school? (4th edition) (HGIOS?4) quality indicators and is offering a rationale for change. However, the quality of FIPs is too variable. Leaders should ensure all FIPs include ambitious targets which are specific, measurable and timely. The SIP identifies actions to support the development of employability skills and to embed the CES entitlements. However, these priorities have not yet been adopted explicitly through FIPs.

- All middle leaders regularly meet and work well as a team. Senior leaders should continue to support middle leaders to develop further their confidence to contribute to strategic leadership within faculties and across the school. Senior leaders are working closely with middle leaders to review progress, particularly around tracking and monitoring. There are weekly extended leadership team (ELT) meetings to ensure a shared understanding across the school of the focus on improved outcomes for young people. This is beginning to build middle leader's contribution to leading change across the school.

- Staff previously participated in working groups from across the school to take forward school improvement priorities. Following a local authority validated self-evaluation visit, most staff were redirected to focus this time to work within faculties on improving consistency of high quality learning and teaching. Faculty staff have looked at aspects of learning and teaching, including sharing the purpose of learning and offering effective feedback. This is impacting positively on learning and teaching, however it is reducing the opportunity for staff to learn by engaging with others across the school. An important next step will also be to focus on improving learner engagement.

- Staff are eager to engage with leadership opportunities through professional learning. A minority of staff undertake SQA roles and share this experience with staff. A few staff across all faculties have undertaken enhanced professional learning with an external organisation. This is empowering these staff to begin to disseminate learned strategies and approaches to colleagues. Identifying and highlighting examples of good practice across the school will support in-house professional learning and collaborative working. Professional review and development (PRD) processes support staff effectively to identify their priorities for professional development. Staff should ensure these development targets are aligned with SIP and FIP priorities.

- Most young people demonstrate leadership in a range of ways including arranging charity fundraisers or adopting leadership roles in physical education. The successful pupil-led "Global

Goals Group" is allowing young people to demonstrate leadership in tackling sustainability issues. Young people hosted a Community Climate Action Conference in March 2019 with a similar event planned this term. A few young people engaged in school improvement workshops exploring emotional health and wellbeing. This resulted in the development of a few, effective, pupil-led enquiries such as implementing therapy animals. A few young people are participating in an Arctic expedition with The Polar Academy. These learners engage in training, lead an expedition to Greenland and deliver presentations to young people about their experience and the impact it has had on them.

- The school engages well with a range of community partners. It is an active partner in the Local Improvement Network (LIN). Staff benefit from access to and sharing of data such as the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). This is supporting them to increasingly recognise the challenges faced by young people and are becoming more responsive to need. Staff have contributed to the Rural Poverty Action Plan and accessed mental health training delivered by the LIN. While partners make a valued contribution, the impact of their work is variable and few have direct influence on school improvement.

- The strategies to develop the entitlements of CES, Work Placement Standard (WPS), Career Management Skills (CMS) and the requirements of DYW are fragmented. As a result, staff regard this as add-ons to delivery rather than an underpinning culture to support pathways and inform the choices of young people. The school needs to plan more effectively how DYW will be taken forward, ensuring that all staff have a shared understanding of DYW and their responsibilities in relation to it.

- The school has in place a range of partnerships which enhance the delivery of the curriculum. However, whilst all partners make a valued contribution, the impact of these engagements is variable and few influence the scope and nature of the curriculum. The school have identified as part of the School Partnership Agreement with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to engage with the My World of Work (MyWoW) profiling tool to support young people to understand and record their skills development.

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

■ In almost all classes, young people benefit from positive relationships with their teachers. Learners welcome emerging restorative approaches applied by the majority of teachers. Most young people enjoy their learning and participate well in lessons. Overall, most young people are motivated, behave well and show respect for learning. In a few lessons, low-level disruption compromises learning. When young people are involved in group work, or are given opportunities for independent learning, their levels of engagement increase. Too often, learning is passive and overly teacher-led. Opportunities for young people to lead aspects of their learning should be extended further.

■ Staff focused recently on improving learning, teaching and assessment. At the heart of plans for improvement is the recently confirmed Bell Baxter Learning Standard (BBLS). Staff's effective self-evaluation of learning, teaching and assessment is supporting the implementation of BBLS. This now needs to be understood more effectively and embedded across the school. This should assist staff in delivering consistently high quality learning experiences for all young people. A well-planned programme of learning and teaching visits, involving senior leaders and staff, are supporting improved learners' experiences.

■ Senior leaders are aware of the need to widen the engagement of young people in improving the school. Through their role as members of a Learner Council, young people are able to influence improvements in aspects of the classroom environment. A minority of young people think that staff listen to them and takes their views into account when implementing change. In a few curricular areas, young people are encouraged to provide feedback on their learning experiences. This heightens their engagement and assists teachers in evaluating the effectiveness of their classroom practice. Young people's roles as sports and languages ambassadors offer them opportunities to improve outcomes for other learners.

■ Teachers and senior leaders' have aspirations for the young people at Bell Baxter High School. They participate in well-focused programmes of professional learning. This is helping staff understand how to develop high quality learning experiences. The BBLS is beginning to have a positive impact on how teachers plan lessons. Staff are at an early stage of developing a skills framework to support a common language for young people to identify and understand skills for learning, life and work. However, this has not yet impacted on young people.

■ Increasingly, teachers plan learning, teaching and assessment in a coherent manner. In almost all lessons, teachers confirm the purpose of learning. There is a need to ensure such steps stimulate interest and enthusiasm for learning. Having effectively outlined the purpose of learning, teachers should more regularly reflect on this with pupils during and at the end of lessons. In a few lessons, young people are involved in identifying how they will know they have achieved success. This develops their understanding and strengthens their engagement in learning.

- Teachers employ a variety of approaches that promote learning. In most lessons, this includes using questioning to elicit interest and understanding. Similarly, the majority of teachers structure activities that are designed to stimulate learning and engagement. This is not yet consistent across the school. In S1 and S2 in particular, tasks and activities are not always well matched to the needs of all learners. There is a need to ensure pace, challenge and support for learning is appropriate for all young people. In most lessons, teachers use digital technologies to support learning. In a few subject areas, teachers use technologies imaginatively and create opportunities for interactive learning in a digital context. Such approaches provoke interest and increased levels of engagement.

- The quality of feedback to young people is inconsistent. In a minority of lessons, teachers clearly confirm young peoples' strengths and areas for development through learning conversations or written feedback. To encourage young people to take greater pride in their work, teachers should monitor classwork more regularly. Senior leaders are aware of the need to develop further approaches that ensure all young people are aware of the next steps to extend their learning and improve progress.

- Within the Broad General Education (BGE), teachers use an increasing range of approaches to assessment. In a few lessons, imaginative assessment contexts are created to confirm progress in learning. Similarly, in a few lessons, peer-assessment is used well. Such practice should be further shared with others across the school. Within the senior phase, teachers design assessment activities that are well-matched to the requirements of National Qualifications.

- Assessment information is shared with young people and in most curricular areas young people articulate confidently the level at which they are working. The same assessment information is used to generate reports for parents. In most cases, such reports confirm precise ways in which young people can further improve their learning and attainment in particular curricular areas. In most curricular areas, teachers use assessment data as part of self-evaluation activities. This is helping staff to plan learning, and adapt and adjust courses where necessary. In the senior phase, teachers analyse assessment information robustly and determine action points designed to improve outcomes for learners.

- Most teachers are developing their understanding of National Benchmarks. Staff undertake limited moderation activities, including working with colleagues in the primary sector in aspects of literacy and numeracy. They should now broaden moderation activities to focus on wider aspects of the learning, teaching and assessment.

- Within the BGE, a recently revised tracking and monitoring system records young peoples' levels of attainment in all curricular areas. This process has the capacity to indicate progress of particular groups of young people including those with barriers to their learning. Teachers have benefitted from professional learning in this area and staff in all curricular areas now link specific aspects of learning with levels of attainment recorded. A priority for the senior leaders is to confirm clear expectations for how such assessment data is analysed and used to raise attainment for individuals and groups of learners.

- In the senior phase, a more established approach to tracking and monitoring is in place. This gives teachers access to both current and aspirational levels of attainment. Teachers, supported by senior leaders, use the information well to plan interventions to raise attainment. For example, particular young people at risk of under-achieving are identified and benefit from well-targeted and planned strategies to raise their attainment.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ Staff continue to review the curriculum to better meet the needs of young people. The curriculum framework continues to evolve and change in response to external factors as well as evidence gathered through self-evaluation. In 18/19, important changes to the timetable, budgets and staffing structures influenced a review of learning pathways from S2 onwards.

■ More recently, Bell Baxter's 2020 vision outlines further changes to the curriculum. The vision includes aspirations for a framework that should provide young people with opportunities to make strong progress through S3 and into the senior phase. Staff aim to provide learning pathways in line with the needs and interests of young people which should raise their attainment.

■ Staff are at the early stages of developing literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as a responsibility of all. Recent work has focussed within the English and Mathematics faculties to improve skills and ensure appropriate progression. Staff are also developing approaches to transitions from primary to S1 to ensure young people's experience is consistent in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders are aware of the need to develop a shared understanding of approaches to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing for all staff. All staff should work to make sure all young people develop the skills they need for learning, life and work.

Broad general education

■ In recent years, staff have developed a range of transition events to support young people in their move from P7 to S1. There has been a strong focus on pastoral support. Staff provide opportunities for children across the cluster to meet each other and experience learning and activities in the high school setting. This includes taster sessions in physical education and technology during Primary 7. A treasure hunt supports children to gain confidence and independence travelling to school and exploring the school. Parents are positive about the improvements to transition and report that their children settled very quickly to the new environment.

■ Skills Development Scotland (SDS) staff engage well with cluster primary schools to introduce children in P7 to a range of activities aimed at improving their understanding of career pathways. These are effective in supporting their transition and in raising young people's aspirations.

■ Enhanced transition arrangements are arranged for young people who require additional support with their learning or for those for whom transition to a large school is particularly challenging.

■ Staff recognise the need to continue work on transition to ensure coherence and progression in young people's learning across the curriculum. Work has begun to improve the consistency of experiences in 1+2 languages. All young people now learn French and Spanish in S1, building on learning in primary school. In-service days are used for primary and secondary staff to develop learning pathways for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. As this work progresses, teachers should ensure planned learning, teaching and assessment builds on young people's prior experiences, achievements and attainment. To support effective transition, staff should develop a shared understanding of the moderation cycle. They should continue to engage with cluster schools to agree shared standards and expectations across the curriculum.

■ Currently, young people in S1 to S3 experience a broad general education, learning across all curriculum areas. Courses are designed using the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and provide progression. Young people choose nine subjects at the end of S2, enabling them to specialise and learn at fourth level in S3. They then make further choices at the end of S3, choosing seven courses leading to qualifications at the end of S4.

■ Teachers understand the need to address long-term attainment concerns through providing appropriate learning pathways for all young people. Helpful, well-attended information evenings about planned changes have recently been held for parents. The headteacher has spent time during a recent in–service day with all faculties discussing curriculum changes and receiving useful feedback from the staff. Whilst staff are positive about aspects of the planned changes, they have concerns about the pace of change to the curriculum when there are many other changes underway in the school.

■ The current implementation of choices for S3 mean some young people may not be receiving their entitlement to continue with a broad general education. Young people should continue to learn across all areas of the curriculum, maintaining a breadth of learning to the end of S3. This includes providing courses for young people who require opportunities to consolidate areas of their learning at third CfE level as well as the provision for those specialising at fourth CfE level. Staff need to continue to keep the third year experience under close review. S3 needs to provide all young people with appropriate progression in their learning and a firm foundation for courses in the senior phase leading to qualifications.

■ The current changes to the curriculum aim to improve progression, meet the needs of all young people and raise their attainment. The changes include when choices are made by learners and the range of pathways available to them. Learners in the current S2 now choose two-year courses leading to qualifications. The plan for learning in S3 involves incorporating fourth level learning with the learning required for succeeding at National 5 by the end of S4. These changes aim to provide more time for deeper learning and pathways through and beyond school to a positive destination. These changes need ongoing review to ensure that all S3 learning remains largely focused on CfE and does not prioritise the requirements of National Qualifications.

■ There are currently no interdisciplinary learning opportunities to support young people to make connections in their learning in new and challenging contexts.

Senior phase

■ In the senior phase, young people in the current S4 take seven courses leading to qualifications. This is a change from previous years, when six course choices were available in S4. In S5 and S6, most young people take five courses. The range of pathways on offer in the senior phase has increased. They now include courses leading to a wider range of qualifications over different SCQF levels, for example, National Progression Awards, Higher National Certificates, Open University modules and Foundation Apprenticeships.

■ Parents and young people have opportunities to meet with guidance staff or senior leaders to discuss course options. However, in order to make informed choices about courses leading to qualifications, young people require reliable evidence of their attainment in the BGE. The wide range of opportunities and events available to learners in the senior phase is supporting most to engage in appropriate and aspirational pathways. These are not readily signposted or recognisable to all young people. Whilst they have access to a range of services and on-line information to support their awareness of a range of careers pathways, opportunities for them to make informed choices about the full range of pathways is overly dependent on

relationships, access to, and the availability of, information. The information related to courses and links to future careers needs to be more readily accessible in a user-friendly format. On occasions, choices are limited by column choices and transport issues.

- Religious and moral education (RME) is part of the curriculum from S1 to S3. In S4 to S6, RME is provided through suspending the timetable for four afternoon sessions throughout the year. This approach needs kept under review to ensure that it is meeting national expectations. Physical education (PE) is part of the curriculum for all young people from S1 to S4 with time allocation in line with national expectations.

- Recent changes to timetabling are broadening opportunities for young people to engage in courses offered by the local colleges. Due to transport challenges, most of this is offered in school which limits the experience of learning outside school. The school offers a range of Foundation Apprenticeships through partnership with the local authority and Fife College to senior phase pupils. Useful pathway maps show routes for progression and future career opportunities.

- Staff do not systematically apply their understanding of the national DYW priorities to planning and delivery of the curriculum. Recent professional learning sessions are supporting staff understanding of CES using SDS inserts and Local Market Intelligence data. Staff have not yet implemented this fully across the school.

- Staff knowledge of Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) and Skills Investment Plans (SIP) to raise awareness of local employment opportunities is not consistent across the school. Classroom activities across curricular areas do not always make appropriate connections between careers and learning. This results in young people having reduced opportunities to identify future aspirations and plan their transitions into further learning or employment.

- There are a large number of initiatives taking place across the school which are supporting improving positive destinations. However, staff do not always identify these experiences as part of the entitlements of CES.

- The school does not have in place a strategy to ensure all of young people experience appropriate learning within the workplace as defined in the WPS. This is limiting the opportunity for young people to make informed choices about their future career options.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Senior leaders promote parental engagement. Members of the Parent Council contribute to the school's Standards and Quality Report and were consulted on the school's vision and values. Members are well informed about school matters at Parent Council meetings through the headteacher report, a workshop on the BBLS, and presentations such as the recent course choice and curriculum model proposals.

- The Parent Council is well organised and supportive of the school. Minutes of meetings are available through the school website, local media, and posted on social media platforms. They support families through a blazer scheme, sponsor awards at the Junior and Senior Awards ceremonies, and contribute to school activities such as the Global Goals group, the forthcoming Polar Expedition, and health and wellbeing initiatives.

- Senior leaders should ensure that the views of parents are taken into account when making changes which impact on young peoples' learning. A majority of parents would welcome opportunities to participate in, and contribute to, activities where parents and their child can learn together.

2.1 Safeguarding

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

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	satisfactory

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Almost all staff have positive relationships with young people. This helps to support approaches to wellbeing and inclusion. Young people appreciate where strong relationships facilitate improved care and respect. Most young people feel safe in school and recognise that they have a trusted adult with whom to discuss personal issues. Drop-in clubs at breaks and lunchtimes allow young people, including vulnerable young people, a place to meet and relax. However, more than a few young people thought that the school could do more to help them feel safe. Staff should take further steps to explore with young people ways to improve their expressed views, particularly around bullying, behaviour and fire safety.

- Whilst young people's views are sought on some aspects of health and wellbeing, staff should inform young people how their opinions have actually led to change. Less than half of the young people feel that the school listens to their views or takes their views sufficiently into account. Staff now need to work together to ensure all young people feel they are being listened to. This is an important area for staff to improve.

- Staff use focus groups and conversations with young people to gauge success in improving aspects of young people's wellbeing. Senior leaders recently introduced a monthly focus on the national wellbeing indicators at assemblies. Young people's understanding, and use, of national wellbeing indicators, to support them in taking more responsibility for their wellbeing, is at an early stage. Teachers and senior leaders should continue to embed wellbeing indicators within classrooms and across all learning. Staff should be clearer with their plans to evaluate the success of this work. This should support young people to experience stronger outcomes in relation to their wellbeing.

- The majority of young people are supported well by their teachers. Some of this support is delivered through social education (SE). Principal teachers of guidance have been working, in conjunction with colleagues from other Fife schools, to refresh and update the SE programme. However, staff acknowledge that continued work is necessary to finalise a programme that meets the needs of learners at Bell Baxter High School. Young people's views should be captured and used to support this work.

- Young people are beginning to be more involved in their social education classes. Young people involved in the Global Goals Group have developed well their understanding of the rights of young people. This impressive, pupil led initiative provides an example of young people finding their voice and taking positive action to bring about change and improvement. The school community should build on this, whilst embedding the refreshed school values. Further work is required to involve all young people in increasing their knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC.

- Staff are beginning to make some use of collated data to improve further outcomes for young people's health and wellbeing. They use this, combined with their knowledge of local health issues, to determine priorities for the SE curriculum. Staff have worked with partners such as Police Scotland and Barnardo's to tackle successfully local issues relating to anti-social behaviour and substance misuse as part of the SE programme. They are working to improve outcomes for young people affected by these issues.

- Across the school, staff are making better use of professional learning on aspects of nurture and mental health. This is resulting in most young people being supported better. Staff work productively with partners to raise young people's awareness of mental health and to access counselling services. Additionally, through further partnership working with other professionals, a few identified young people are supported to maintain positive mental health. Around 30 young people are being trained as mental health ambassadors. This should improve young people's knowledge and skills and help them support their peers.

- There has also been a recent focus on improving outcomes for young people by planning individualised programmes for specific learners. This has resulted in improved attendance and attainment for these learners. The developing use of restorative conversations is supporting a reduction in the numbers of referrals, and exclusions. There is, however, a need for staff to support more effectively a few young people, particularly in the BGE, who do not always display positive behaviour. Whilst staff have a number of strategies to manage learner behaviour, it is important that they take into account fully the national guidance on promoting positive relationships. This should enable a more constructive approach to supporting all young people. Making sure that young people are fully involved in developing these positive behaviour strategies is important in ensuring they feel included in important decisions that affect them.

- Senior leaders are at the early stages of addressing weakness in the approach to planning support for all young people. They have started to put in place a wellbeing and education plan for each young person who requires it. Staff should continue to develop these plans to ensure all include clear, high quality individual learning targets which are informed by the views of young people, staff and parents. Senior leaders acknowledge that all young people who experience barriers to their learning should be identified at an early stage and have appropriate support in place. They should make better use of data to monitor and track the progress of all young people with a barrier to learning.

- Specialist staff provide teachers with a range of effective strategies to meet the needs of young people with specific needs. While these strategies are applied well in some faculties by staff, it is important that they are applied more consistently across the school. A majority of young people with barriers to learning are experiencing appropriate support for them to overcome these barriers. A few, however, are not and this is having an impact on the outcomes for these young people. Staff are not yet taking full account of legislation under the Additional Support for Learning Act. They should monitor the progress of care experienced young people more closely. This includes considering whether they require a coordinated support plan.

- Young people who attend the bases are supported well socially and emotionally. Most of these learners also attend classes in the mainstream setting. Staff need to ensure that there is clear communication between all staff. This should lead to more consistent approaches being used to support young people who move between support bases and mainstream classes. Some young people, previously disengaged from school, now benefit from responsive nurturing approaches which support them to participate in their learning. Attendance and attainment for young people who were at risk of not achieving has improved.

- Most young people believe the school helps them to understand and respect others. However, a minority express concerns about bullying behaviour and its impact on them. Senior leaders should use available data more effectively to inform their practice in relation to incidents of bullying. Senior leaders should review the school's approaches to anti-bullying in line with national guidance. This should include consultation with the school community.

- Young people learn about equalities and diversity through the SE curriculum. A few young people have been supported by the school to set up a LGBTQ+ group. This is at the early stages of implementation. Whilst some young people are able to demonstrate some awareness of equality and diversity issues, staff need to develop further young people's understanding of diversity and discrimination. Young people from the DAS work alongside their peers in mainstream classes well. As a result, young people are generally supportive of their peers who require additional support. Senior leaders now need to ensure all individuals have equal opportunities to make the most of their talents and abilities.

- The main duties of the nutritional regulations of the Health Promotion and Nutrition Act are being met and food and drink provided by the catering service meets the required food and drink standards.

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
BGE

- The school provided data showing the percentage of young people achieving third and fourth level in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders acknowledge that staff are still working to improve the reliability of the data, particularly in literacy. In 18/19, by the end of S3, the data shows that almost all young people achieved third level in literacy and less than half achieved fourth level. Almost all learners achieved third level in numeracy by the end of S3 in 18/19 and most achieved fourth level. Staff should ensure all professional judgements are built on robust assessment evidence which takes better account of national guidance.

- Staff are developing their use of data to support their professional judgements, including the use of Scottish National Standardised Assessments. They engage in limited moderation activities in school to support professional judgements in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders acknowledge the need to ensure all staff have a greater understanding of approaches to assessment and moderation, including working more widely with colleagues from outwith the school.

Senior phase
Leavers

- Most young people leaving school between 13/14 and 17/18 achieved literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better. The majority achieved this at SCQF level 5 or better.

- Almost all young people leaving school between 13/14 and 17/18 achieved literacy at SCQF level 4 or better. Most did so in numeracy. For all young people leaving school, those leaving from S4 and those from S5, the percentage achieving numeracy at SCQF level 3 or better and four or better, is often significantly lower or much lower than the virtual comparator (VC) between 14/15 and 17/18. There is also a decrease in the percentage of young people leaving from S5 attaining at these levels. Senior leaders have taken steps to address this, with the percentage of young people leaving with literacy or numeracy at SCQF level 3 or better, or 4 or better, from S4 showing signs of improvement. It is now in line with the VC.

- Most young people leaving school between 13/14 and 17/18 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. The majority did so in numeracy. The majority of young people leaving school between 15/16 and 17/18 achieved SCQF level 6 or better in literacy. Less than half did so in numeracy. This is broadly in line with the VC. The percentage of young people achieving SCQF level 5 in numeracy has improved, moving from being significantly lower than the VC in 13/14 and 14/15 to in line between 15/16 and 17/18.

- A few young people left school with no literacy or numeracy qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better between 13/14 and 17/18. Senior leaders have taken steps to address this including through a focus on "Young learners at risk of not attaining". This is having a positive effect on improving the percentage of young people who achieve literacy or numeracy at SCQF level 3 or better. In 18/19, for the S4 cohort, attainment at SCQF level 3 or better is now significantly higher than the VC in literacy and numeracy.

- Senior leaders have worked well to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy at S4. The percentage of young people in S4 achieving in numeracy across all measures is at its highest for the five-year period ending in 18/19. There is a similar picture for literacy at SCQF level 3 or better and level 5 or better. The percentage of young people achieving literacy at SCQF level 4 or better has improved from 15/16 and is now back in line with 14/15 figures.

Attainment over time
BGE
- Senior leaders have introduced a tracking system to the BGE which staff are at the early stages of using. As a result, there is now achievement of a level data for all curriculum areas which they share with staff to support improvements. Senior leaders acknowledge there is work to do to ensure the data entered into the tracking system is of a suitably high quality. As a result, they are unable to identify confidently areas where attainment is improving.

Senior phase
- The attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of leavers has fluctuated between 13/14 and 17/18, showing no clear pattern of improvement. Attainment is, however, in line with the VC, with the attainment of the highest attaining 20% of leavers significantly higher than the VC in 13/14, 14/15 and 17/18.

- In S4, there have been improvements in the average complementary tariff scores of the lowest attaining 20% of young people between 15/16 and 18/19. This has moved from being significantly lower than the VC in 15/16 and 16/17 to being in line with the VC for 17/18 and 18/19. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people is in line with the VC between 14/15 and 18/19.

- By S5 based on S5, attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people is broadly in line with the VC. There is, however, no clear pattern of improvement.

- By S6 based on S6, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% of young people has improved. It is significantly higher than the VC in 18/19 for the lowest attaining 20% of young people and in 17/18 and 18/19 for the middle attaining 60% of young people. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people has been significantly higher than the VC in 14/15, 17/18 and 18/19.

Breadth and depth
- Senior leaders have indicated that a number of factors have had an impact on breadth and depth measures. These include the curriculum offering (see 2.2 Curriculum: Learning Pathways) and an increasing number of young people leaving school at S5.

- In S4, most young people achieved five or more qualifications at SCQF level 4 or better in four out of five years between 2014/15 and 2018/19. The percentage of young people achieving six or more qualifications has improved from being significantly lower than the VC in 14/15 to 16/17 to in line with the VC for 17/18 and 18/19. The majority of young people achieved four or

more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better in 15/16, 16/17 and 18/19. The percentage of young people achieving one or more to six or more qualifications is at its highest in 18/19. The majority of young people achieved one or more qualifications at SCQF level 5A or better over the latest five-year period. The percentage of young people achieving one or more courses to six or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better or 5A or better between 14/15 and 18/19 is broadly in line with the VC. The exceptions are at five or more and six or more where it is significantly lower than the VC at times between 14/15 and 17/18.

■ By S5 based on S5, the majority of young people achieve two or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C or better. There has been a decline in the percentage of young people achieving one or more to five or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better from 16/17 to 18/19. It has moved from being in line with the VC in 16/17 to significantly lower than the VC in 18/19 for three or more and four or more courses. There is a similar picture at SCQF level 6A or better for one or more to three or more courses with the percentage of young people achieving qualifications at this level significantly lower than the VC for 18/19.

■ By S6 based on S6, there is no clear pattern of improvement at SCQF level 6C or better or at level 6A or better. The percentage of young people achieving one or more to five or more qualifications is broadly in line with the VC for the five-year period. There have been improvements in the percentage of young people achieving one or more qualifications at SCQF level 7C or better from 15/16 to 18/19. Attainment has been significantly higher than the VC between 16/17 and 18/19.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

■ The majority of young people make a positive contribution to the life of their school and wider community. They are actively encouraged to take on leadership roles with regard to issues that inspire and enthuse them. Large numbers of young people lead a variety of opportunities and activities across the school and associated primary schools. Through these opportunities, they are gaining value leadership and communication skills. Through the Global Goals group, sports ambassadors for Fife and Children in Scotland Learners Rights Group young people are becoming responsible citizens and effective contributors. They are also developing skills for life, learning and work.

■ As a result of a pupil led approach to learning for sustainability, young people across the school confidently reflect on the way they think about the environment and are empowered to take action to improve and protect it. The school is currently working towards its fourth Eco-Schools Scotland Green Flag. Young people in the Global Goals group (formally Eco, Amnesty and Fairtrade) have developed important organisational, planning and communication skills through the development of their action plan and through the Community Climate Action Conference they delivered in Sept 2019.

■ The school formally recognises achievements through its annual junior and senior award ceremonies. An effective colour award system operates. These awards are self-nominating and recognise a wide range of activities that young people are involved in including: sport, music and volunteering. In 18/19, a few young people achieved at least one colour award. Over 100 young people attended a recently introduced sports award dinner. This event successfully celebrated achievements and commitment to school sport. The positive engagement by young people in sport has also been recognised through the achievement of a sportscotland Gold award.

■ The use of social media to promote and share successes is improving across faculties and the whole school. A few young people gain Saltire awards for volunteering. The school is in the

early stages of increasing its knowledge and understanding of wider achievement. Young people's wider achievements would benefit from more effective tracking and monitoring of the skills they are developing. There is scope to improve how staff celebrate young people's wider achievements and to increase further accreditation opportunities across all year groups.

Equity for all learners

■ Senior leaders have a number of support systems to help ensure equity for young people. This includes enhancing staffing and introducing support systems to raise attainment. The percentage of young people achieving five or more courses at SCQF level 3 or better is now significantly higher than the VC for 18/19. There has also been a successful focus on improving attendance and alternatives to exclusion for young people. Staff have undertaken work to reduce the cost of the school day by reviewing costs associated with trips and uniform. There is still work to be done to reduce the costs associated with the curriculum and to ensure equity for all.

■ Attendance has been in line with the national average for the years where figures are available. The school provided attendance figures which show an improvement on previous years. Exclusion from school is below the national average for years where figures are available. From figures provided by senior leaders, the number of exclusions has reduced to the lowest recorded in five years.

■ The majority of young people requiring additional support for learning who left school in 17/18 achieved literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better. The percentage achieving at this level declined from the previous two years. It is, however, still above the VC.

■ The SIMD shows a profile where less than 5% of young people live in deciles one to two, around 80% in deciles three to eight and less than 20% in deciles nine to ten. Between 13/14 and 17/18, the attainment of young people leaving school, as measured by average complementary tariff points, is broadly in line for deciles four to nine, when compared to young people who live in similar SIMD data zones across Scotland. The school have correctly identified that the average complementary tariff scores for young people residing in SIMD 10 leaving school in the last few years is significantly lower than those living in the same decile across Scotland. Senior leaders are taking steps to address this.

■ The percentage of young people moving to a positive destination is in line with the VC, and compare well to the local and national comparators for all leavers. Almost all young people who left school between 13/14 and 17/18 have moved on to an initial positive destination. In 17/18, the majority of young people left school for either higher education or further education. Approximately a fifth of young people left to go in to employment.

■ The percentage of young people who left school to go to an initial positive destination from S4 in 15/16 and 16/17 was significantly lower than the VC. The school has taken to address this through effective arrangements with a range of partners.

School Empowerment

■ Empowering teachers and practitioners

■ Refer to QI 1.3 for further evidence.

■ Staff are empowered to be leaders of learning within their context. They regularly seek out professional learning opportunities to enhance their skills and practice. They engage where possible with local networks to develop their professional knowledge. Recently, time has been committed during in-service days to allow cluster secondary and primary staff to collaborate and develop their professional knowledge relating to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff are developing their teaching skills through professional reading and are sharing this knowledge with colleagues during faculty meetings. A recently developed staff book club is supporting staff to connect with literature and research.

■ Staff are involved in and contribute to evidence-based decision making, particularly in relation to self-evaluation.

■ Staff and young people are beginning to take on collective responsibility for leading initiatives within the school. This involves effective collaboration in the pursuit of improved outcomes. Initiatives such as Mentors in Violence Prevention, Youth Philanthropy Initiative, LGBTQ+ Equalities Group, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and sports, languages and mental health ambassadors are allowing important school priorities to be overtaken through staff and learners working together to identify the needs and strategies for improvement.

Context

Bell Baxter High School houses a department of additional support (DAS) for 24 young people with complex learning and physical needs. Fife Council refers young people to the department who need significant additional support. The school offers three types of learning environments for identified young people: It provides small group education within the DAS, small group education in mainstream and, targeted support for participation in selected mainstream lessons. This allows for a bespoke blend of mainstream and specialist small group education for those who require it.

Leadership of change

- The principal teacher works collaboratively with staff, parents and carers to provide a nurturing learning environment that, for the majority young people, is appropriately challenging. Teachers nurture positive relationships and take full account of young people's individual circumstances. They encourage high expectations of learners and the majority of lessons are relevant and stimulating. The senior leadership team consult teachers and staff on a few whole school initiatives such as the implementation of the refreshed vision and values. However, young people have not yet been included. Senior leaders should ensure that young people within DAS are included in decision-making processes that affect them.

- Teachers and leaders are responsive and well organised. The principal teacher makes detailed plans on a weekly and daily basis to meet young people's needs. These plans change regularly in response to young people's needs. The principal teacher re-assesses risks effectively and frequently redeploys resources to get the right help in the right place. She consults with pupil support assistants annually to record their areas for development and to evaluate professional actions. This allows all staff to contribute to plans for continuous improvement within DAS and gives a basis for effective timetabling. The team, comprising experienced staff, take a pragmatic approach which parents respect. The senior leadership team's strategic role within the DAS should now become more visible and plans for the development of the DAS should feature more prominently in whole school improvement plans.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- There is a positive ethos in the DAS and most young people are engaged in learning. Staff work with learners effectively on a one to one basis in order to meet learning needs. Young people are motivated and are happy to discuss their targets and their learning. In around half of lessons, digital learning provides variety, which helps to create hooks for learning. A few young people make use of digital assistive technology to aid communication to valuable effect.

- There is a wide spectrum of learning needs within the small groups of young people. A few teachers need to plan learning which is responsive to the needs of all young people more effectively. In a few lessons, young people disengage because consolidation tasks do not appropriately match their needs. Young people do not yet contribute views, or have sufficient opportunities to lead learning. The DAS ethos has developed organically over time and staff have a common set of values. However, the whole school vision and values of excellence, togetherness and curiosity are not yet embedded within the DAS.

- The majority of young people are motivated to learn and most lessons are relevant and meaningful. In a few lessons, tasks are too easy or not suitable for all learners. When this happens, learners become agitated and it can lead to disrupted learning. Pupil support assistants (PSAs) support the majority of lessons effectively. PSAs encourage young people to be positive and independent and young people respond well to their direction and advice.

Staff from the DAS accompany all learners throughout the school and offer reassurance, encouragement and effective learning support.

■ Teachers plan using CfE experiences and outcomes. They update planning documents and learning logs regularly. They track coverage of learning experiences adequately by updating which outcomes learners attain. Teachers could be improved further by updating the process for recording achievement of outcomes. Teachers compile assessment evidence within learning logs although National Benchmarks are not yet fully used when assessing progress. Leaders should now develop an uncomplicated departmental overview of progress in all curricular areas. Staff who teach in mainstream should contribute to this tracking. Staff within the DAS have begun to use a school wide, online tracking system. Teachers and leaders should continue with plans to monitor the data generated and review the effectiveness of this system.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

■ Teachers' record progress against the wellbeing indicators and each learner has targets set for their health and wellbeing. As a result of this process, the majority of young people are safe, healthy and active. Teachers and parents routinely review individualised education plans. These plans also contain a chronology of significant events and notes regarding transitions. Young people progress through transitions successfully following careful planning. Teachers and parents work together effectively and agree to take forward constructive actions that help young people to achieve success in learning. Timelines are not always set on targets and they are not always measureable and specific.

■ The department complies with statutory guidance and takes seriously the responsibility to improve outcomes for young people. Most young people have a positive attendance record and staff within the DAS have an effective system in place to monitor absences. Staff conduct personal care in a dignified manner and all staff respect young people's rights

■ Almost all learners in the BGE and senior phase access lessons in mainstream. At senior phase, learners achieve and attain across the curriculum and have choice in subject areas. Young people from the DAS work alongside their peers in mainstream classes. Learners across the school benefit from experiencing diversity in an everyday setting and young people are generally tolerant and supportive of their peers with additional support needs.

Raising attainment and achievement

■ The majority of learners meet their targets during S1 to S3, can discuss their progress, and are familiar with their learning logs. Almost all young people at senior phase achieve at National 2 and National 3 in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. A few, with appropriate support, achieve qualifications at National 5.

■ Young people have achieved numerous sporting achievements. Last session, a few people from the DAS won medals in the East Cross Country Series, organised by Scottish Disability Sport and Scottish Athletics. Recently young people have participated in national championships for both athletics and swimming. The variety of sporting activities on offer provides enjoyment, promotes self-esteem and improves physical wellbeing for young people. The school community celebrate success through displays in corridors, in whole-school and DAS assemblies and in the local press. All young people meet with a careers adviser and there is a strong focus on skills development in both BGE and senior phase classes. Last session all leavers went on to initial positive destinations. Leavers benefit from valuable partnership opportunities with local agencies such as social work and local colleges

■ Young people have a variety of support needs and receive varying degrees of additional support. The majority of learners feel included, engaged and involved in the life of the school. Almost all young people have a full timetable. The majority of learners can identify individual targets and discuss progress made in relation to their targets. However, teachers need to be more creative in their teaching approaches so that every child can access learning and achieve success equitably.

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.