

Summarised inspection findings

Larkhall Academy

South Lanarkshire Council

16 June 2020

School name Larkhall Academy
Council: South Lanarkshire
SEED number: 8525234
Roll (Sep 2019): 1169

Key contextual information

Larkhall Academy is a six-year non-denominational school which serves the town of Larkhall and villages of Stonehouse, Ashgill and Netherburn. The school has an enhanced provision, which provides support to, currently, 50 young people with a range of additional support needs. The school works closely with the nine associated primary schools within the Larkhall Learning Community. Following a period of secondment from his post as headteacher in another South Lanarkshire School, the headteacher was appointed as headteacher of Larkhall Academy in November 2018.

Attendance is generally below the national average. Exclusions are generally in line with the national average for years where figures are available. In February 2019, 24% of pupils were registered for free school meals. In September 2019, 37% of pupils lived in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In September 2019, the school reported that 31% of pupils had additional support needs.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

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
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- The open, collaborative and purposeful leadership of the headteacher has helped to create positive conditions for change. Together with the senior and middle leadership team, he has developed trust, improved relationships and established a more collegiate ethos in Larkhall Academy. There have been significant changes in staffing over the last three years at all levels, including the senior leadership team, which have had an impact on the pace of change. The senior leadership team have a clear focus on improving professional learning for all teachers. Staff, parents and young people feel confident in the clear vision for improving learning and teaching and were comprehensively involved in the recently refreshed school vision – “To inspire and enable all our young people to flourish and fulfil their aspirations” We aspire, We believe, We respect’. Staff work together enthusiastically to reflect the values of “Kindness, Together, Resilience” in the daily life of the school.
 - Senior leaders have worked well on the strategic approach to develop and improve learning and teaching. The recently introduced learning and teaching framework is beginning to have a positive impact on classroom practice. Senior leaders need to monitor the pace of change in all key improvement areas more closely. They should continue to work collaboratively on improvement.
 - Staff are beginning to use data on the local area, such as Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), well to inform planning for learning and teaching. This is having a positive impact on targeted groups of young people. Teachers are making improved use of labour market intelligence. Senior leaders should now ensure that information available nationally related to careers, work placement standards and Career Education Standards is used meaningfully.
 - The school improvement plan focuses on three strategic priorities which correctly identify areas that need to be developed. These are: improving learning, teaching and assessment, raising attainment, achievement and curriculum, equality and inclusion. These priorities are clearly articulated in departmental improvement plans and are appropriate for the school community. Curriculum leaders are now more confidently reflecting on and monitoring the impact of improvement activities. Link depute headteachers have regular meetings with curriculum leaders to maintain a helpful whole school overview of improvement. The school has not yet developed a strategic approach to improving the curriculum which engages stakeholders and delivery partners fully. Senior leaders should continue to develop their strategic overview of improvement planning across the school, taking into account information from self-evaluation evidence. They should set clear, focussed timescales for improvement activities.
 - Strategic planning for closing the poverty-related attainment gap using Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) funding and pupil equity funding is well planned, monitored and evaluated. Activities and interventions are reflective of the local context and are leading to measurable

improvement in attainment for targeted groups of young people. For example, there are improvements in reading outcomes for young people who live in SIMD deciles 1 and 2 and for those who are entitled to free school meals.

- Senior and middle leaders have taken positive action to empower staff and support them to become more self-reflective. Improvements in the approach to professional review and development support this. Professional learning is now outward looking and aligned well to the school improvement plan. Where teachers undertake Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) duties, this is providing a helpful understanding of standards in the senior phase. Staff participate in a wide range of professional learning, including a range of opportunities which are bespoke to the school. Staff members create some of these and almost all teaching staff participate. Most teachers engage with and lead sessions in this voluntary programme, which is beginning to have an impact on improving learning and teaching. Staff are also encouraged and supported to participate in a wide range of further learning at local authority level and work collaboratively with colleagues from other schools. A few are undertaking studies at Masters level. This is beginning to impact positively on improving learners' experiences. Middle leaders have benefitted from an intensive programme of leadership development, which has positively developed their skills in leading and managing staff. Senior and middle leaders employ a range of coaching approaches well to encourage staff to reflect on their own practice. Senior and middle leaders should continue to work together to ensure that the impact from the wide range of professional learning is sustained and linked to key improvement priorities.
- An effective distributed leadership model ensures that staff throughout the school participate in a range of positive leadership opportunities, and are able to make suggestions for areas they would like to take forward. These range from setting up a nurture provision to introducing a whole-school reading programme. Senior leaders should consider other opportunities for classroom teachers to take leadership roles, share effective practice and shape school policy.
- Approaches to improving leadership skills of young people are being developed with S6, in particular, improving skills through paired reading and leading sporting events. Senior leaders should take action to ensure that all young people can engage and participate meaningfully in decision-making across all stages of school, including around their own learner pathways.
- The headteacher and senior leaders should involve young people, teachers, parents and partners more meaningfully to improve outcomes across the school. Young people, in particular, need well-planned opportunities to be involved in shaping changes in school, and to evaluate the impact of change. Further development of the pupil council and pupil leadership team should take place to allow this to expand further.
- Partners appreciate the openness of the school, finding senior staff receptive, helpful and focused on meeting young people's needs. Partner organisations plan their work well with individual members of the senior leadership team. They do not yet fully share information, plan and evaluate their work together. The school would benefit from forming a strategic planning group of key partners to develop a stronger analytical overview of the impact and outcomes with partner organisations' work. This could enable partners to contribute more constructively to school improvement.

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 relationships between young people and teachers are positive. There is a caring and supportive ethos, which is underpinned by the school's refreshed values of Kindness, Togetherness and Resilience. Most young people feel their teachers are approachable and treat them fairly and with respect. There are positive and purposeful interactions between staff and young people in most classes.
- The majority of young people engage well in their learning and respond positively in lessons. In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of the learning with young people. Useful opportunities for young people to speak to their teachers about their learning and progress are evident in the majority of classes.
- More than a few young people are too passive and need to be given greater opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. A few young people, particularly in S1-S3, are off-task which impacts on the climate for learning. Teachers should ensure learning experiences are well-matched to meet young people's needs. This includes appropriate pace and challenge to improve levels of engagement. In considering the principles underpinning Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), a few teachers should also take greater account of relevance and enjoyment.
- Young people respond well when they are given the opportunity to work in pairs and groups. They would benefit from further opportunities to take more responsibility for their learning. For example, to lead their learning, to learn more collaboratively with their peers and be allowed more personalisation and choice in learning.
- The school has a clear strategy in place to make better use of digital technology. The widespread and considered use of a virtual learning environment has encouraged improvements in approaches to revision, learning and homework. Staff and learners have used software well to promote motivation and inclusion. By helpful use of a video-sharing platform, voice recognition and text technology, young people show a greater level of engagement and are encouraged to research and submit work more readily. In more than a few classes, learners are benefiting from the use of this digital technology that is enhancing learning.
- The recently introduced Larkhall Academy Learning and Teaching Framework is beginning to have an impact on classroom practice across the school. Teachers are more consistently sharing the purpose of the lessons with young people. They need to improve the quality of what they share, to help young people understand better what they are learning and how they will recognise success in their learning. Middle leaders should support improvement in this area within their faculties.

- Most teachers provide clear explanations and deliver well-structured lessons. However, the quality of learning is too variable across the school. Teachers should share the good practice that exists. Too often, learning is teacher-led. There is scope for a more consistent approach in developing a wider range of collaborative tasks which promote leadership activities and support greater pupil involvement. Teachers' greater use of plenaries would also support young people to recognise their own success and next steps.
- Most teachers use questioning well to elicit responses from young people. Teachers should develop the use of questioning techniques to promote higher-order thinking skills and increase challenge for young people. The majority of teachers provide effective feedback to support young people with their learning and this is particularly evident in senior phase classes.
- The school has put in place collaborative, professional learning opportunities to encourage teachers develop further their skills in using a variety of engaging teaching approaches. Through initiatives such as Learning Visit Fortnight, the school is working to improve the consistency of high-quality learning and teaching by sharing practice and training together. This is a commendable approach and senior leaders should continue to ensure this important focus on pedagogy and teacher empowerment remains a key priority in the school improvement plan.
- Across the school, departments are continuing to develop an effective range of approaches to assessment. Teachers' planning, particularly in S1 and S2, is linked well with CfE experiences and outcomes and National Benchmarks. Approaches to assessment in the senior phase are robust and well developed. This is leading to raised expectations of young people's performance in National Qualifications. Starting this session, the school is collaborating with three other high schools in the local authority. The strategic aim of this collaboration is assessment and moderation in the broad general education (BGE). This is resulting in teachers having an increasingly robust understanding of moderation and achievement of a CfE level. The school's BGE collaborative working group has representation from each faculty which is ensuring impact across the school.
- Subject leaders are using a range of data, including Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) data, effectively. They use this in a variety of ways. For example, to support learners as they progress from the BGE into the senior phase. In addition, a wider in-depth analysis of prelim exam performance at an individual level helps to identify and support learners' next steps in preparing for National Qualifications. This is improving planning and supporting appropriate interventions to raise attainment. This practice should now be shared across the whole school.
- For a minority of young people, learner conversations are impacting positively on their progress. This dialogue between teacher and learner results in tracking updates that are shared with parents. Senior leaders and principal teachers should work with teachers to ensure this approach is robust and consistent across the school.
- Tracking and monitoring is taking place across all subjects in the BGE. Staff are developing confidence in using National Benchmarks. Learners from S1 to S3 value the feedback they receive from teachers. Staff are helping young people develop their understanding of how they are making progress within CfE levels. Most learners are able to talk about their next steps in learning. Staff should develop further this positive approach. The school is linking BGE tracking with predicted National Qualification levels. This revised approach is raising aspirations of learners in classes when used well. Senior leaders should consider monitoring and evaluating impact across the school to ensure consistency of approach.

- Tracking and monitoring in the senior phase is well established and operating effectively. Staff are using the tracking information well to determine young people's progress towards National Qualifications. Senior leaders are working with staff to set aspirational targets for all young people in the senior phase. Targets given to departments are resulting in increasingly more appropriate and aspirational presentation levels for learners. The school should evaluate the impact of the various strategies to ensure learners are supported to achieve their potential.
- Most learners in the senior phase know their working grade and their target grade for each subject. Staff should encourage young people to articulate their developing skills and value these in terms of future learning and career pathways.
- Teachers in a few departments are working closely with colleagues from primary schools in the cluster. Senior leaders should extend this practice to allow staff to take better account of prior learning and provide appropriate challenge for all S1 learners.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The headteacher, senior leaders and staff are aware that the curriculum requires to be reviewed and updated to meet the needs of all young people more effectively. Staff have added pathways to the senior phase which are beginning to support the needs of a broader group of learners. The headteacher and senior leaders are aware that the senior phase needs to provide more opportunities to develop further skills for learning, life and work along with opportunities to study for qualifications.
- The development of a curriculum rationale is a school improvement priority. The BGE curriculum is now being planned to ensure it provides stability, consistency and builds strong relationships with a reduced number of teachers. The headteacher also aspires to create more flexible routes through the senior phase.
- The plans for developing literacy across the curriculum are further ahead than numeracy and health and wellbeing. Following consultation with a range of stakeholders, the school has recently introduced a daily programme involving all young people and many staff in promoting reading for enjoyment. This initiative is at an early stage of implementation and while it does have potential to impact on literacy across learning, it requires on-going monitoring and evaluation of impact. Staff are working to develop approaches to numeracy across learning. This includes collegiate working, a helpful numeracy booklet shared with the school community and an increasing understanding of numeracy skills for staff. However, senior leaders are aware of the need to develop numeracy as a responsibility of all staff. The school is also aware that it has to support further all staff in fulfilling their responsibilities for developing young people's skills in and understanding of health and wellbeing.

BGE

- Courses in S1/2 are designed using the experiences and outcomes of CfE in order to provide progression in learning. Young people specialise at the end of S2. The school needs to continue to keep the third year experience under close review. S3 should provide all young people with appropriate progression in their learning and a firm foundation for courses in the senior phase leading to qualifications. Senior leaders should continue to monitor that all young people receive their entitlements within CfE.
- The school expectation is that all S3 learners will choose a modern language up to the end of S3. This is enabling them to build on their experience of modern language learning in primary school as well as to support 1+2 languages. Parents are involved in the course choice process.
- There has been a longstanding tradition of supportive pastoral transition arrangements between the high school and the associated primaries. This supports young people moving from P7 into S1. There are a number of pastoral transition events with primaries, as well as visits to and from the high school, over the P7 year. Parents are very positive about transition and how it supports young people to settle.
- There are enhanced P7 to S1 transition arrangements in place for those learners who require additional support. Teachers do not yet receive attainment information from curricular areas other than literacy and numeracy. Having this information is an important next step to ensure all young people build on their prior levels of attainment and ensure progression in their learning. It will also ensure that the pace of learning in S1 is appropriate to learner needs.

Senior phase

- Young people in S4 are studying seven courses leading to qualifications. This is a change from previous years where eight course choices were available. In S5/6 most young people take five courses. The range of pathways in S5/6 has increased recently. Care should be taken to ensure all courses are promoted and communicated equally and are made available to all.
- In a few S5/6 classes, young people learn in groups aiming for qualifications at different Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels. Teachers work well with these arrangements to make them successful for young people. In a number of subject areas, S4 learners are dual presented for National 4 and National 5 qualifications. The school should keep this under review to ensure more effective presentations, limiting the number of unnecessary assessments young people have to take. The offer should be reviewed to take account of the voice of young people in consideration of the local context of the school.
- Pupil support staff make considerable efforts to ensure parents are fully involved in the course choice process. Parents are very positive about the support provided during this process. There is good access to careers advice through specialist Skills Development Scotland (SDS) staff, with drop-in facilities available in the school library. Senior leaders have made effective use of labour market information in the broad planning of the curriculum. This has also been useful in informing parents and young people about career options.
- The school have an appropriate level of MyWOW (my world of work) registrations, and is broadly consistent with authority and national norms. There is a group of S3 MyWoW ambassadors in place, although this is the first year of this provision. They assist with the registration process for younger learners. Young people are aware of MyWoW, and use it well to help support their career options and job applications.
- The school works within the local authority coordinated Gradu8 programme to offer an appropriate range of vocational options to senior phase learners. Working within the consortium arrangement allows a wide range of course options to be offered. Foundation Apprenticeships are offered in a wide range of subjects through a local authority consortium arrangement, which helps extend the range of career pathways.
- The Career Education Standards feature in the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) but are not used systematically across the school in the planning and evaluation of the curriculum. Senior leaders recognise that work placement is not well developed within the school and that this should be reviewed.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Relationships between parents and the school are characterised by trust and respect. Parents find school staff approachable. They feel welcome in the school and appreciate the responsiveness of school staff when they raise any issues concerning their children. Through Parent Voice (the Parent Council), communication has improved. Social media is used to inform parents of school events and to celebrate the achievements of young people. The Parent Voice group are very active and support well parents and the school. Parents are being alerted through social media and through text messages when progress reports are due to be sent home. The school should continue to explore how best to inform those parents who do not use social media or access the school's website regularly. Parents appreciate the supportive ethos of the school and speak highly of the work of pupil support staff. They have an awareness of the school's recently revised vision, values and aims. They feel the school has achieved a much-improved level of stability under the current leadership team and that the ethos of the school and its reputation in the community has improved.
- Parents receive a range of tracking updates and a full annual report from teachers. Parents welcome receiving these more regular tracking reports in addition to the annual pupil reports. A few would welcome improved information on their children's progress in specific subjects. Information that is more detailed could enable parents to become more involved in supporting their children's learning and to understand areas where more support is needed.
- Parents have a developing understanding of changes to the senior phase and have been consulted on arrangements for subject choice and the number of courses available for SQA qualifications. They appreciate that the range of learning pathways available for young people is getting broader through college and other links. Parents would welcome further growth of partnerships with community organisations. For example, there is scope to link the school's work on pupil voice to the youth forum work carried out by the Machan Trust in the local community.

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

- Staff understand the local community and context in which the young people live. Staff know the young people and their families well. Most young people say that they have someone with whom they can talk if they have concerns. The school's values of Kindness, Togetherness and Resilience emphasise the increasing importance of relationships being at the heart of the school.
- Senior leaders are focusing on developing young people's wellbeing across the school. Young people and staff should use the language of the wellbeing indicators more regularly. Staff are not yet able to identify and measure progress in wellbeing outcomes for all young people. Senior leaders are at the early stages of developing a system to track and monitor these outcomes for young people. This should support a strategic approach to wellbeing.
- The profile given to the mental wellbeing of all staff and young people is a strength of the school. There is a significant focus on raising awareness of the importance of positive mental health. Young people and staff have learned together as mental health first aiders. Young people say that this valuable work is reducing the stigma around mental health. In their role as mental health ambassadors, senior pupils have successfully established a mental health and wellbeing group which supports younger pupils. The helpful 'Wall of Support' effectively highlights and signposts young people to the wide range of support available.
- Young people are aware of children's rights and are focusing on three identified rights. They relate these rights to their own daily lives, in both school and the local community. Staff should continue to develop approaches to embedding children's rights explicitly in school policies and practice. A minority of young people say that the school takes their views into account. They participate regularly in school surveys but are not always aware of the actions taken as a result. Young people would welcome more opportunities to participate and share their views on ways to improve aspects of school life.
- Young people are learning to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing through the PSHE curriculum. Young people from S1 to S6 contributed to the school's PSHE curriculum review. As a result, the programme was refreshed to include topics identified as relevant by young people, for example body image. Staff should continue to review the context of the PSHE curriculum and methodologies of its delivery with young people to ensure it remains relevant to their needs and interests.
- Promoting positive relationships is at the heart of the school's approach to wellbeing. Senior leaders plan to take this important work forward through the further development of the 'Treat Me Well' anti-bullying policy. The majority of young people say their peers treat them fairly and

with respect. However, senior leaders are aware of the need to develop further respectful relationships between young people across the school. As a result, they have successfully introduced a restorative approach for an identified year group. As planned, they should continue to develop further these approaches. A few young people should demonstrate more respect for the school environment.

- Young people confidently undertake roles of responsibility. S6 pupils talk insightfully about their varied leadership roles including paired reading and sports ambassadors. They describe articulately how these roles contribute to the development of their skills for learning, life and work.
- Support for learning staff have a clear understanding of barriers to young people's learning. They plan a wide range of strategies supported by effective use of digital technology. A few young people are extracted from classes for specific interventions. There is evidence of improved outcomes for these young people. In order to ensure that all young people's learning experiences take place in an appropriate inclusive learning environment, senior leaders should review the model of extracting young people from classes. In addition, they should ensure that all planned interventions are well matched to assessed need. Staff should review and streamline the number of interventions for individual young people. Plans for young people need to ensure specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely targets which are regularly monitored and reviewed. A strategic overview of the school's provision should enable staff to meet the needs of all learners in the Larkhall Academy community and support a more consistently coherent learning experience.
- Support for learning staff provide detailed profiles for all staff outlining young people's additional support needs. In addition, they deliver whole school professional learning to support teachers' developing understanding of their roles and responsibilities in providing universal support. This should be used to enhance the learning experience of all young people across the school. The school is to be commended on its recent efforts to enhance professional learning and promote inclusive practice through input from nationally recognised speakers.
- Staff track and monitor the progress of vulnerable groups of young people. The school's nationally recognised work with young people from the Gypsy Traveller Education Group is leading to increased attainment and positive destinations to employment or further education. A few young people benefit from accessing the nurture department. Effective partnership working with a range of external agencies leads to bespoke packages for individual young people. For example, Barnardo's provides effective support for young people and their families to support increased engagement in learning.
- The school's exclusion level is higher than the national average and the attendance level is lower than the national average. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to address these as a priority. They are piloting a new protocol for attendance but it is too early to evidence the impact of this initiative. Senior leaders should explore alternatives to exclusion to ensure that all young people feel included, engaged and involved.
- The school is meeting the main duties under the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The nutritional regulations which apply across the day are being met. Senior leaders should ensure the delivery of religious and moral education complies with national guidance.
- Pupil support staff plan pastoral transitions for young people entering S1. Enhanced transition programmes are in place and the school works to provide flexible and appropriate

arrangements for individual young people. Where a young person may be working with other partner agencies, the school liaises effectively to support the transition process.

- The school is successfully promoting a few aspects of equality and diversity. Its equalities and diversity position statement supports a commitment to valuing and celebrating diversity and challenging discrimination. Young people have been successful in raising the profile of LGBT in the school and, along with external partners, are helping Larkhall Academy to become more inclusive. School assemblies are used to reflect on appropriate language and being kind to all. Young people have successfully presented to staff at in-service training to raise awareness of LGBT rights. It is important that other aspects of the Equality Act are understood and that senior leaders evaluate approaches to equality, inclusion and diversity so that all young people feel valued.

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

- By the end of S3, almost all young people achieved CfE third level in reading, writing, listening and talking in 2019. Almost all young people achieved CfE third level in numeracy. Achievement of a level data at CfE third level shows improvements in literacy and numeracy from 2016 to 2019. Teachers' professional judgement of CfE third level is becoming more robust and reliable.
- By the end of S3, the majority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in reading and writing and most achieved this level in listening and talking in 2019. There have been overall improvements in the percentages achieving this level in reading and writing since 2016. The school has deployed a range of additional support, resources and interventions to improve literacy in the last session, including having a daily reading period. The school has been successful in widening young people's engagement with books and texts. This is showing some signs of helping to improve the reading ages and abilities of some learners who have been using a programme to support reading at an appropriately challenging level. Most young people achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy in 2018 and 2019. However, senior leaders acknowledge that these professional judgements are not yet fully reliable.
- The headteacher and his staff are aspirational for all young people. Teachers have been engaging more with internal moderation of their programmes of work and making the purpose of learning more explicit. This is helping to improve achievement and attainment.
- Teachers use their professional judgement, Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSAs), other standardised assessments and a range of other information, to monitor improvement in young people's attainment. Staff track and monitor closely young people's attainment and progress in learning across the BGE and senior phase. Senior leaders have begun to support staff through professional learning. The headteacher has been actively involved in improving teachers' skills in analysing and making effective use of data. This is helping teachers to identify individual and groups of young people within the data sets. Staff are now becoming clearer about the actions required to raise the attainment and achievement of young people.
- Staff are increasingly taking responsibility for developing young people's literacy and numeracy across the school. The school has trialled young people experiencing a reduced number of teachers, for example, in social subjects. Teachers in the faculties involved have revised their courses and programmes to reflect this change. The school reports early signs of improved outcomes for young people. Senior leaders should evaluate the impact of this as they roll out

the programme with particular reference to progress within the BGE and on young people's ability to make better transitions into the senior phase.

Literacy and numeracy

Senior phase

- There are improving trends at SCQF levels 3 or better and 4 or better. Almost all young people leaving school in each of the five years from 14/15 to 18/19 have achieved literacy at SCQF level 3 or better. In 18/19, almost all leavers achieved at SCQF level 4 or better and most leavers achieved at SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. Almost all young people leaving school in each of the five years from 14/15 to 18/19 have achieved numeracy at SCQF level 3 or better. Most young people leaving school in 2019 achieved numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better. In 2019, the majority of young people leaving school achieved numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better.
- There are improving trends in the last five years in the percentages of young people leaving school with literacy or numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better through a course award. In 18/19, performance at SCQF level 5 or better in literacy is significantly higher than the virtual comparator (VC). There is an improving trend in the percentage of young people with additional support needs leaving school having achieved SCQF level 4 or better and for level 5 or better in literacy since 14/15. Whilst for those young people, the trend at SCQF level 3 or better and level 4 or better in numeracy has been positive over this period, there has been a declining trend at SCQF level 5 or better.
- In S4 from 14/15 to 18/19, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 3 or better and level 4 or better in literacy has been improving over time and is in line with the VC. By S5 based on the S5 roll, the percentages of young people attaining at SCQF level 5 or better in literacy has increased from 15/16 to 18/19. It is now significantly much higher than the VC after being significantly lower in 15/16. By S6 based on S6, the percentage attaining at SCQF level 6 is in line with the VC for four out of the last five years.
- In S4 from 14/15 to 18/19, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy has improved and in 18/19 is moved to being significantly higher than the VC. Almost all young people achieved at this level in 18/19. By S5, based on S5 at SCQF level 5 or better, the percentage of young people attaining has been in line with the VC in four of the last five years. However, at SCQF level 6 or better there has been a decline over the same period. By S6, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5 or better and level 6 was in line with the VC in four of the five years between 14/15 and 18/19.

Attainment over time

BGE

- Senior leaders have a strategic overview of progress over time in the BGE. Staff are making use of data from primary schools. Senior leaders believe that staff are improving their judgement of young people's progress through and achievement of CfE levels. Teachers are able to show the progress of learners through the BGE, updating the recently revised tracking system. This is beginning to allow senior leaders and teachers to benchmark over time. Teachers work collaboratively with other staff within the school and with colleagues across other secondary schools to improve their judgement of young people's progress through and achievement of a CfE level. Teachers are increasing their use of National Benchmarks.
- Senior leaders use the whole school data to identify and challenge inconsistencies in performance in the BGE. The school's approaches to tracking young people's progress has

allowed it to identify better young people's needs and interests and to target appropriate interventions.

Senior phase

- Young people study on average seven courses in S4, five courses in S5 and four courses in S6 in the senior phase. Staff are reviewing the curriculum to widen the range of courses and programmes available. As a result, there has been an improvement in a number of outcomes for young people.
- The attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people leaving the school, as measured by average complementary tariff points, has improved over the period 16/17 to 18/19. Attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of young people has moved from being significantly lower than the VC for 14/15 to 16/17 to in line with for 17/18 and 18/19. Whilst there have been improvements for this group of learners, there has been a decline over the same period for the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people. Although there has been a decline in middle attaining 60% of young people, the school's performance was lower than the VC in 16/17 but moved to being in line with the VC in 17/18 and 18/19.

Breadth and depth

- At S4, the percentage of young people achieving five or more to seven or more qualifications at SCQF level 4 or better is improving and is significantly higher than the VC over the two years from 17/18 to 18/19. In 18/19, the percentage of young people achieving one or more to six or more qualifications at 5C or better improved to in line with the VC between 16/17 and 18/19 and is now the highest in the five-year period in 2019. At SCQF level 5A or better, the percentage of young people achieving one or more to six or more qualifications is in line with the VC between 17/18 and 18/19. However, the school has set targets to continue to secure greater numbers of passes at 'A' and 'B'.
- By S5, the majority of young people achieved four or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better between 14/15 and 18/19. While there is no clear pattern of improvement at this level, attainment is broadly in line with the VC for one or more to six or more courses. The percentage of young people achieving one or more to six or more courses at SCQF level 5A or better improved to the highest performance in the four-year period to 18/19. It is now significantly higher than the VC for one or more course and in line for two or more to six or more courses. The majority of young people achieve one or more course at SCQF level 6C or better. There is no clear pattern of improvement between 14/15 and 18/19. Attainment at this level has been broadly in line with the VC for this time period. At SCQF level 6A or better in 18/19 for one or more to five or more courses the school is in line with the VC.
- There is no clear pattern of improvement at SCQF level 6C or better or level 6A or better and at times there are declines in attainment between 14/15 and 18/19. The percentage of young people achieving one or more to five or more courses is broadly in line with the VC for the five-year period.
- The number of learners with additional needs gaining qualifications at SCQF levels 2 and 3 has increased and the school is now more aspirational in also presenting young people, where appropriate, at SCQF levels 4 and 5.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people across the school have opportunities to achieve through participation in sport, music, drama, and other after-school and lunchtime clubs and groups. Young people's successes in sports and other activities are celebrated through display boards, newsletters and

on the school's website. Almost all young people in S6 are achieving SQA Leadership Awards at SCQF level 6 and gaining important skills as a result of their volunteering work. Those young people in S6 who will be moving on to university appreciate the work the school has undertaken to help them feel confident and ready for post school life. The Youth Philanthropy Initiative has recently been introduced for all in S3, enabling young people to gain experience and skills through volunteering and to achieve Saltire Awards. A few young people in the Additional Support Needs (ASN) provision are achieving the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at Bronze level.

- Pupil support teachers identify young people who could benefit from targeted support to improve attendance or behaviour. A youth worker in school delivers the Prince's Trust programme for twelve young people. Those taking part are gaining Prince's Trust Awards. The Machan Trust works with two small groups of young people from S1 to S3 to provide support to improve attendance, bridging the gap between home and school. Universal Connections works with three school groups of targeted young people with low school attendance in S2, S3 and S4. Those taking part are achieving Dynamic Youth Awards and a few are achieving Bronze level Youth Achievement Awards.
- The school is working with the council's Youth Employability Service to develop its approach to improving young people's post school destinations. Approximately 50 young people in S4 and S5 are taking part in the Gradu8 programme enabling potential access to a broader range of qualifications. Further development of work with the Employability Service is at the planning stage.
- Overall, there is a need for the school to establish a clearer overview of young people's participation and achievement. Pupil support staff know young people and work well with others to meet their needs. However, the school has only begun recently to establish an accurate overview of young people taking part in opportunities available across the school and in the local community. The school is only now able to identify those young people at risk of missing out through taking part in few or no activities. The school has further work to do to quantify accurately the numbers of young people achieving accreditation for achievement within the school and in the local community. Many aspects of provision are relatively new and at too early a stage to identify trends over time. There is limited information on how young people's acquisition of skills in other contexts are considered, assessed and developed in other aspects of school-based learning.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a clear focus on ensuring equity for all learners. They have introduced a number of support systems to help ensure equity for young people. This includes enhancing staffing and a focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. There is a school-wide approach to reading. As a result, staff have improved the reading age of a number of targeted young people. Staff have also successfully undertaken work on reducing the cost of the school day and have well-designed systems to support access to free school meals.
- A focus by senior leaders to raise the aspirations of young people has been successful. They have a good understanding of where gaps exist in attainment, where they are closing gaps and where there is further work to do. As a result of this focus, attainment in literacy and numeracy in the BGE has successfully been raised for young people who reside in SIMDs 1 and 2, and for those who receive free school meals. Progress has been achieved in closing the attainment gap at National 5 English in S4. In addition, the percentage of young people in S4 achieving five or more courses at SCQF level 3 or better improved and is now significantly much higher than the VC for 18/19. The percentage of young people achieving numeracy at SCQF level 3

or better and the percentage achieving SCQF level 4 or better in S4 and S5 has improved. It is now significantly higher in S4 than the VC and significantly much higher in S5. In the BGE, senior leaders have made progress in closing a gap in numeracy attainment for the most deprived young people.

- Attendance has been below national average for the years where figures are available. The school provided attendance figures for 17/18, 88.3%, and 18/19, 87.7%. These figures show a general pattern of decline from 13/14 to 18/19. Exclusion levels are in line with the national average for years where figures are available. From figures provided by senior leaders, the number of exclusions has increased to its highest level in 18/19 for the period between 13/14 and 18/19 after a period of consistent decline. Senior leaders have developed an attendance improvement plan and are working well with a range of partners to address these concerns.
- Most young people requiring additional support for learning who left school in 17/18 achieved literacy at SCQF level 4 or better. The percentage achieving at this level increased from 16/17 to 18/19. It is above the VC in 17/18 and 18/19.
- The SIMD shows a profile where 37% of young people live in deciles one and two, around half in deciles three to eight and 15% in deciles nine and ten. Between 14/15 and 18/19, attainment for young people leaving school, as measured by average complementary tariff points, is broadly in line for deciles one, four, five, and seven to ten, compared to young people who live in similar SIMD data zones across Scotland. The attainment of young people leaving school who reside in deciles two, three and six, as measured by average complementary tariff points, is significantly lower or much lower than the VC for 18/19.
- The destination indicators compare well to the local and national comparators for all leavers. Almost all young people who left school between 15/16 and 18/19 have moved on to an initial positive destination. This is significantly higher than the VC for 16/17 and significantly much higher for 17/18. They are in line for 18/19. In 17/18 and 18/19, the majority of young people left school for either higher education or further education. Approximately 30% of young people left to go in to employment.

School Empowerment

■ Empowering Learners

See QIs for further information.

- A number of strengths were noted. For example, approaches to improving leadership skills of young people is developing with S6, in particular, improving skills through paired reading, and leading sporting events. S6 pupils talk insightfully about their varied leadership roles including paired reading and sports ambassadors. They articulately describe how these roles contribute to the development of their skills for learning, life and work.
- A group of S3 MyWoW ambassadors assist with the registration process for younger pupils. Pupils are aware of MyWoW, and use it well to help support their career options and job applications. Young people confidently undertake roles of responsibility. Young people, in their role as mental health ambassadors, have successfully established a mental health and wellbeing group, which supports younger pupils. The helpful 'Wall of Support' effectively highlights and signposts young people to the wide range of support available.
- Young people have successfully presented to staff at in-service training to raise awareness of LGBT rights. Within the ASN provision, through their participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, young people are building their skills for learning, life and work. They are experiencing new challenges and developing their confidence and resilience.

Quality of Specialist Provision

Context

Larkhall Academy's enhanced provision is a local authority resource, which provides support to young people with a range of additional support needs from across South Lanarkshire Council. Young people access the provision on a full-time basis and are on the roll of Larkhall Academy. The provision has had a considerable turnover of staff in recent years, particularly at senior leadership level. At the time of inspection, 50 young people were attending the provision for their education.

Leadership of change

- The provision has had a considerable turnover of senior leaders in recent years. This has impacted negatively on the pace of change and continuous improvement. A range of systems is in place to measure the performance of the provision. These include learning and teaching observations, pupil surveys, sampling of learners' work and tracking of attendance data. However, there is little evidence, yet, that this influences change or improvements within the provision. The acting deputy headteacher has been in post for six weeks. She has installed a clear sense of direction for the provision focused on improving outcomes for young people. She has strengthened the existing quality improvement approaches with far greater emphasis placed upon measuring young people's progress and attainment. As a result, the provision is well placed to increase the pace of change and impact positively on young people's outcomes.
- Staff, in the provision and across the school, undertake a wide range of professional learning aimed at meeting the diverse needs of young people in the provision. Recent training in trauma, adverse childhood experiences and autism supports staff to understand the needs of young people better and amend their practice accordingly. This has contributed strongly towards embedding the positive, caring culture within the provision. Young people feel safe and able to seek support where appropriate. Staff should now reflect on how this training can influence their learning, teaching and assessment.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- The culture and ethos across the provision is encouraging, supportive and welcoming. Teachers and support staff skilfully assist young people to focus on learning. This works well for young people. They feel safe at school and enjoy working in small groups both in the provision and across the school as a whole. A minority of young people from the provision join their mainstream peers in classes. The school supports most of these young people well.
- The majority of lessons are relevant, dynamic and hold young people's interest. The provision needs to ensure, now, that all lessons engage and motivate young people. Expectations of what young people can achieve needs to be consistently high. Teachers throughout the school should continue to develop their aspirations for all young people in the provision. The school recognises the need to continue to improve the quality of learning and teaching and is making a positive start in this regard.
- The majority of teachers plan lessons well and give clear explanations and instructions. Most lessons build on young people's prior knowledge. Most teachers ensure young people are aware of the purpose of lessons and how they can achieve success. Despite this, a minority of young people do not fully understand and find it difficult to explain what they are learning.
- Teachers are beginning to adopt a shared understanding of standards at the BGE. However, in a few lessons, there is not enough differentiation or personalisation to meet learners' needs.

Senior leaders have increased the range of moderation approaches within and beyond the provision and staff have begun to use National Benchmarks in planning assessments. Progress is clear although the practice is not yet fully established.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Supporting wellbeing is a strength within the provision, underpinned by positive relationships and an effective pastoral approach. As a result, young people are nurtured, happy and treated with dignity. They feel safe and cared for in the provision. This is having a significant impact on young people's ability to be successful in school. Attendance is high in the provision and exclusions are very low. A few young people have significantly improved their school attendance since their referral to the provision.
- Young people access a range of therapeutic interventions including mindfulness, listening, meditation and movement. They participate well, but often have difficulty in seeing the purpose of these sessions and any impact it has on their wellbeing or readiness to learn. The school should measure better the impact of these initiatives on young people's wellbeing and skills development.
- Every young person has a learner profile and an additional support plan. These documents have some duplication and targets are often not useful in identifying barriers to learning. Senior leaders acknowledge the need to develop these plans and improve upon both the quality and consistency of such reports.
- The majority of young people cope with full periods in class although many access support to manage this. A few young people have moved on to almost full-time supported attendance in mainstream for a variety of subjects. Teachers come into the department to lead learning in their subject and at other times. The school encourages inclusion by locating lessons within the mainstream setting. Most young people are comfortable in the base and appreciate the opportunities to join classes in mainstream. The school should continue to seek ways for young people to work alongside their mainstream peers.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Almost all young people at the BGE are making progress with their literacy and numeracy. They are successfully building on prior learning and overcoming any gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills development. Young people at the senior phase are gaining National Qualification units at National 2, 3 and 4. Attainment data clearly shows an improving trend in terms of the range, number and level of qualifications achieved by young people. This session, the projection is that the young people presented will achieve National Qualification course awards as well as individual units. As recognised by the school, staff should continue to raise their expectations of what young people can achieve in order to raise attainment further.
- Young people are provided with a wide range of personal achievement experiences. Through participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, young people are building their skills for learning, life and work. They are trying new things and developing their confidence and resilience. They are learning important independent living skills and working successfully as part of a team. Young people go on a variety of work placements and volunteer in local schools and businesses. This increases their understanding of the workplace and enhances their citizenship skills. The provision should now more carefully track young people's achievements with increased focus on skills development. This will help staff to plan learning that is progressive and builds on young people's existing skills.
- In recent times, all young people have moved from the provision into positive, sustained destinations including further education, training and employment.

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.