Summarised inspection findings

Biggar High School

South Lanarkshire Council

22 May 2018
Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

In February 2017, 8.2% of pupils were registered for free school meals which is significantly below the national average of 14.1%.

In September 2016, less than 1% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.

In September 2016, the school reported that 21% of pupils had additional support needs.

Key contextual information

Biggar High School is a non-denominational secondary school located in the town of Biggar and serving a rural area. It is part of the Biggar Learning Community, which comprises the secondary school and twelve associated primary schools. The catchment area is very diverse in nature and is geographically widespread. It covers much of the south of the local authority and 85% of pupils are transported to school each day.
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

The school’s vision and aims were agreed in 2012 and subsequently further revised in 2014 in consultation with pupils, parents, staff and partners. The school’s values became central in developing the pupil charter which was a key feature of the school’s work in achieving a Rights Respecting School (RRS) award at level 1 in 2012/13. The school has continued to build on this work through improving partnership working with key stakeholder groups such as associated primary schools, local police, politicians and youth groups. This work was key to the school achieving a RRS award at level 2 in 2014. The values are promoted regularly and well through bulletins and at assemblies. There is more work to do to make sure that these are understood by all and that they underpin the everyday life of the school. This would help support the aim of ensuring equity.

The headteacher, having been in post for five years, has provided effective leadership which has led to a range of improved outcomes for young people. The school has experienced difficulty in recruiting teachers in recent times and to an extent this has hampered planned progress. It now has a period of stability in staffing and is looking forward to the improved pace of change that this will bring with it. The headteacher has been successful in building productive community partnerships which have led to a range improved outcomes for young people. Some of the community partnerships have been important in addressing issues faced by young people in rural areas which limit their opportunity to gain skills for work. The headteacher is valued by staff in the school for his strong commitment to their professional learning. Over recent years, the headteacher and the team of depute headteachers (DHTs) have worked effectively as a senior management team and have together created a climate in which staff feel encouraged and supported to contribute ideas and take them forward. Under their leadership, staff feel involved in the change process.

Staff are encouraged to become familiar with the diverse and widespread catchment area to better understand the lives of the young people attending the school. The school is increasingly becoming data rich. A recently developed system to monitor and track the progress of young people is enabling staff access to rich data and is raising the profile of their role in the excellence and equity agenda. Staff have undertaken professional learning which is helping them to make use of the Insight improvement tool and is further developing their understanding of the socio-economic context of the school. Increasingly, staff are using this knowledge to reflect on what this means for their classroom practice and how their learning and teaching approaches can contribute to closing the attainment gap.

The school improvement plan (SIP) has three overarching strategic priorities which have been decided upon after seeking the views of young people, parents and staff and taking account of local and national priorities. This SIP forms the first year of a three-year cycle of improvement plan priorities in a new approach to improvement planning for the school.
Middle leaders report that the new format is less bureaucratic and that it is helping them understand the interconnectedness of their departmental work with the school, local and national work. At times, targets in both the SIP and department Improvement plans (DIPs) could be aligned better to the results of self-evaluation to ensure that work is focussed in the most effective way to bring about improvement. Some of the impact statements on both the SIP and DIPs could be reworded to be more specific to ensure that they could be evaluated more effectively. Staff show a commitment to, and demonstrate a collective responsibility for, achieving the school priorities for improvement. They demonstrate this in a variety of ways such as participating in one or more of the school improvement groups, leading key projects, and undertaking appropriate professional learning. Parents have been consulted on the SIP through the Parent Council and commendably have formed their own action plan as to how they can contribute to each of the priorities. There is scope for young people and partners to contribute more fully to shaping school improvement.

Leadership at all levels is encouraged across the school. Middle leaders and non-promoted staff undertake a range of activities to develop their leadership skills. These include, leading working groups taking forward work on literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), digital learning, interdisciplinary learning (IDL) and equity. Young people are encouraged to take on leadership opportunities in a variety of ways, particularly at the upper stages. A number of young people develop and apply their leadership skills through serving as DYW ambassadors, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) ambassadors, language ambassadors, or literacy, numeracy, music or transition buddies. Others do this through serving as sports leaders, prefects, house captains and vice captains.

Overall, staff across the school work well collegiately and contribute to educational change. For example, they have worked hard to develop the curriculum, to continue to develop learning and teaching strategies and implement National Qualification coursework. Teachers benefit from a well-planned annual review process which supports them to evaluate the impact of previous targets, celebrate successes and set new targets for agreed outcomes over the following session. There is commitment from staff to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) professional standards and to professional learning and development. This includes a few achieving or working towards a Masters level qualification, a Post Graduate Certificate in Middle Leadership or a doctorate. In addition, a few have benefitted from middle leadership training, many attend Clydesdale sharing group subject meetings and a few attend curriculum planning DHT meetings. The staff professional learning is impacting positively on the work of the school. For example, professional enquiry work on gender bias is helping inform STEM work in the school. Other professional enquiry work has led to targeted group work with young people such as techniques for reducing exam stress.

The school has correctly identified the need to develop a consistency of high-quality learning and teaching. There are targets to support this in the current SIP. However, at present it is not clear from these targets how the school is going to achieve the desired impact. It would be helpful at this stage for senior leaders to develop a clear strategy as to how this is going to be addressed at whole school level and share this with staff. It would be of benefit at this point to have a greater focus on looking outwards before agreeing on the whole school strategy. This could involve continuing to visit other schools, considering best practice in different contexts and reviewing current research-based evidence. Senior leaders and middle leaders have a clear role to play in driving the strategy forward once it has been agreed. Staff have developed the senior phase which now offers young people a wide range of learning pathways. Senior leaders recognise that they need to lead further curriculum development from S1 to S3 to ensure that young people receive their entitlement to a broad general education. Senior leaders plan to address this aspect for development in consultation with young people, parents and staff.
Biggar High School has a shared understanding and vision with key partners for employability focussed work. The entitlements of the Career Education Standards (CES) underpin much of the work of the school, strongly promoted through the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) link. The school is effective in jointly developing appropriate employability focused learning pathways which contribute to the high level of young people gaining positive destinations. Staff in several subject areas work well to ensure delivery of the curriculum is relevant to employment and use visiting speakers, site visits and competitions to enthuse and encourage young people. There are good links with the community in subject areas such as art and design which develop good citizenship skills in young people. Engagement of partners in evaluation or planning of the school curriculum is limited. The school has curricular provision supported by colleges and university partners, including flexible delivery. However, the need is identified by the school and not by the delivery partners. Employers currently have no involvement in the planning or evaluation of the curriculum, although there are well-developed plans to improve employer engagement. There is potential to build on the school’s positive ethos towards partnership working to increase the involvement of partners in planning for change.
### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

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

- Young people’s learning is enhanced by the high-quality relationships that are evident across the school. Almost all young people are highly respectful of staff. Young people are appreciative of the support that they receive in classes, through study and homework clubs and one-to-one support.

- Almost all young people participate willingly in learning across the school. In a few lessons, where young people are given opportunities to develop independence, they demonstrate enthusiasm and are deeply engaged in their learning. A further positive feature in these lessons is how well tasks are matched to the range of young people’s abilities. Work remains to be done to ensure that young people’s needs are equally well met in all classes.

- Young people learn important skills relevant to the world of work through taking part in a range of competitions, business games, design activities and problem solving challenges. As part of their experiences in the personal and social education (PSE) programme, young people enhance their knowledge of career management skills.

- Young people would benefit from closer involvement in developing and sharing success criteria for their learning in lessons. In a few classes, pupils are highly motivated when they receive high-quality feedback, orally or in writing or when they have the opportunity to choose the context or topics they are studying. These positive features of learning should be extended so that young people experience them more consistently.

- While a range of approaches to learning are planned across the school, currently, the majority of learning activities are teacher-led and directed to the whole class. In many cases, this limits the pace of learning for young people and reduces opportunities for them to learn independently. Young people respond enthusiastically when they are given a choice of activities and are involved in planning and directing their learning. Teachers should provide more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and, at times, lead their learning to increase their confidence as learners. Teachers use skilful questioning in several departments including PE, English, science and art and design. Young people would benefit from the school building on existing good practice to develop teachers’ skills in the use of questioning across all classes.

- The school is working to improve the consistency of high-quality learning and teaching. There is scope to further develop consistency of the quality of learning experiences at both department and whole school level. Staff undertake regular classroom observations. The common features of the effective lessons observed are summarised and shared with staff. It would be helpful for staff to receive a summary of the aspects of observed lessons where improvements are required. In a few lessons, ‘teachers’ use of digital technologies enhances
the pupils’ experience. However, there is considerable scope for young people to have more frequent opportunities for digital learning. A number of young people reported access to digital resources prepared by staff helpful over a period of disruption due to adverse weather.

Across the school, departments are continuing to develop an effective range of approaches to assessment and are using these to plan learning and teaching. Most staff share the objectives of each lesson, and what achievement of these objectives might look like. Across the school, staff have been developing the accuracy with which they assess young people’s progress and attainment, including the achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. Staff’s skills in assessment are developing through professional learning within departments, Clydesdale Sharing groups, and meetings with specialist colleagues in the local authority and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

Overall, staff plan well to ensure a sound basis for young people’s learning. Their long-term planning takes account of the need to ensure coverage of experiences and outcomes in learning programmes for the broad general education (BGE) and courses in the senior phase.

Over recent years, staff have developed useful approaches to tracking young people’s learning in the different areas of the curriculum. Staff have monitored attainment across curriculum areas and have taken relevant action where appropriate if pupils have not been making sufficient progress. More recently, staff have introduced a new and more valuable system for tracking young people’s progress. The school’s new approach has a number of additional strengths, for example, in the way it creates a fuller picture of each young person’s learning needs and any potential barriers to learning. The data relevant to each young person is integrated into one source, which enables staff to monitor the progress of the individual pupil as well as identify patterns of attainment across the young person’s experience. This whole school tracking and monitoring system has the potential to improve the effectiveness of targeted support.
2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Across S1 and S2, the school is providing opportunities for young people to experience learning across all eight curricular areas. However, the school needs to ensure all young people experience the full range of experiences and outcomes in each curriculum area. At the end of S2, young people make choices for specialisation but the current choice structure does not provide all young people with their entitlement to a broad general education in S3. For example, the current arrangements do not ensure that all young people would have a continuing experience in modern languages, social subjects, expressive arts and technologies. The school is aware of the need to review current arrangements to ensure young people receive their entitlement to a BGE. The school plans to review this in consultation with young people, parents and staff and will have new arrangements in place for the 2018/19 S3 cohort.

- Young people from S4 to S6 have access to clear guidance on available course options in the course choice booklets. There are a range of qualifications from National 3 to Advanced Higher for young people to achieve. The introduction of new courses, such as, computing science and psychology is helping to meet the needs of young people. This work has involved a greater focus on planning for the next stages of learning or work. The school has also embraced the DYW agenda and has focused on developing the employability of young people. The school has productive links with New College Lanarkshire, Edinburgh College and is developing a further link with South Lanarkshire College. To ensure appropriate progression, the school should continue to develop a broader range of learning pathways in the senior phase to meet the needs of all learners.

- At S5 and S6, there is no continuing experience of religious and moral education (RME). Although young people can choose to progress to National Qualifications in religious, moral and philosophical studies (RMPS) this is not always possible due to the low uptake in the number of young people choosing this subject. The school use outside speakers and the chaplaincy group to encourage deeper understanding and personal reflection on issues of belief and morality but current arrangements do not meet statutory requirements. The school should consider how it can ensure that the study of Christianity, World Religions and Developing Beliefs and Values remain a part of learning in S5 and S6.

- The school supports useful and well-structured opportunities for key staff to attend events and briefings to keep up to date with emerging or new learning pathways. Newer opportunities such as Modern Apprenticeships are well understood by staff, and young people are encouraged to consider these opportunities. The school work well with SDS to make good use of the My World of Work (MyWoW) web presence and have trained a group of senior pupils who act as MyWoW ambassadors. The ambassadors are helping young people and their parents become familiar with these resources and the value in using them. This leadership opportunity is increasing the confidence of the ambassadors as well as raising the profile of the resource. Career guidance and support is a strong feature throughout the school. Subject teachers ensure that they explain the relevance of the learning in their courses to the word of work and to potential career choices. Although the school do not explicitly use the national CES, they do deliver the required entitlements.

- The school continues to promote literacy across learning and there is a whole school literacy group with representation from all faculties. A literacy improvement plan outlines the school’s priorities and actions in this area. Evidence of key vocabulary in each curricular area is on display across the school and literacy benchmarks are being embedded into the assessment criteria of individual departments. There is good progress in some classes taking forward
literacy in learning. However, this good practice should be shared more widely across the school to ensure a consistent approach.

In recent years, the numeracy improvement group developed guidance on common methodology and language for staff to reference when teaching numeracy concepts across a number of subject areas. The school has identified areas for development such as a shared understanding of numeracy benchmarks across the curriculum, and reviewing and further promoting common methodologies. These developments have the potential to raise attainment and improve progress for young people across the school.

The school is at the early stages of developing health and wellbeing across the curriculum as a responsibility of all.

All young people experience a range of planned interdisciplinary learning (IDL) opportunities from S1 to S3. Literacy, health and wellbeing, and to some extent numeracy, experiences permeate and are referenced in these activities. Questionnaires have been used with young people at S4 to gain an insight into the impact of IDL activities on how well they are making progress in their learning. The school recognises that more work is required to further enhance the IDL provision, especially in terms of developing skills for work.

The school has identified digital literacy as an improvement priority. It has delivered a series of professional development activities to support staff in the use of digital technology in the classroom but should now further develop a strategic approach to developing digital literacy skills across the school.

The school had a system of one-week work placement for S4 pupils in operation in 2016/17 and found this to be of limited value. It is at the early stages of introducing a new model initially focussed on S4 leavers providing a more bespoke placement experience. The local authority is planning for this initiative to exemplify a model for which other schools will follow. The school is reflecting on good practice and national guidance. At this stage, the implementation is limited and does not yet fully cover the guidance set out within the national Work Placement Standards (WPS).

The school has identified a few areas where gender appears to have been a factor in the uptake of subjects, for example, computing science and physics. Staff from a number of curricular areas have implemented several initiatives or had young people take part in external events in an attempt to address this issue. These initiatives or events include; ‘Girls into Engineering’, P7 STEM day and the Rotary Club Technology Tournament. The school should continue to explore and further develop initiatives that promote gender equality across the curriculum.
2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school is attempting to increase parental engagement in learning. Staff provide a range of opportunities for parents to learn about the work of their children, including workshops and resources to support learning. For example, parents were invited to a workshop to learn how young people with dyslexia could use software to help them with their reading skills. They could then use this resource online from their home. Most parents who responded to the Education Scotland questionnaire feel the school gives them advice on how to support their child with their learning and the majority report the school organises activities where they can learn together with their child.

- The school communicates effectively to parents through social media, email and at regular reporting periods throughout the year. Most who responded to the Education Scotland questionnaire feel that they receive helpful, regular feedback about how their child is developing and learning at school.

- The school is supported by a strong and effective partnership with the Parent Council (PC). The PC has formulated its own action plan outlining the contribution it will make to the SIP under each of the three strategic priorities. Representatives from the PC contribute to P7/S1 transition events which help support children and their parents with the move from primary school to secondary. Currently, the PC is working to further develop more local business links with the school. It is working with the school to secure further funding for resources to provide support for young people with dyslexia.
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 that need to be addressed.
3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

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

The positive, caring ethos in which there are mutually respectful and trusting relationships between young people and staff is in keeping with the school’s status as a RRS with a level 2 award. There are informative displays around the school highlighting various Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the pupil charter and sets out the expectations of all. However, work needs to take place to ensure that all young people have a full understanding of this. The school is well placed to build on this and make greater use of young people’s prior learning and involvement in RRS as they move from primary to secondary school.

The school supports a wide range of opportunities for achievement outwith the classroom and timetabled lessons and encourages useful learning through these activities. A wide array of sports, arts, charitable and community-focused options encourage confidence, leadership and independence. Many of these opportunities are offered at lunchtimes to take account of the rural setting and after-school travel arrangements for a large number of young people. These activities are important to the social wellbeing of a number of young people.

Young people can talk about feeling safe within the school environment and feel supported by staff across the school. Pupil support staff work well as a team and have a good understanding of the wellbeing indicators which they use when planning for young people. The pupil support team have high expectations for the care and welfare of the young people in their caseload and see them at least weekly when they teach them PSE. This enables them to foster strong, positive relationships and young people are known well by staff in the school. The PSE programme offers young people the opportunity to learn about, consider and discuss a range of contemporary issues. It is evaluated by staff and young people with changes being made which reflect our changing society. The school should continue as planned to develop and adapt the programme to ensure comprehensive and progressive development of skills related to health and wellbeing (HWB) taking into account the National Benchmarks.

Senior leaders are beginning to develop a strategic approach to HWB as a responsibility of all, and positive steps are also being taken by the whole school health and wellbeing group. Whilst still at the early stages, the school has delivered programmes such as ‘Coping with exam stress’ for S4 pupils and a ‘Dealing with mental health’ event for young people. The school has plans to further develop and enhance this universal approach to HWB which include introducing a tool to audit wellbeing of young people at S1. It is anticipated that this will help young people identify and assess their own HWB as well as providing a baseline to enable progress to be measured. There is scope for all staff, across all areas of learning, to promote wellbeing more consistently with young people. This will help young people to further
develop their ability to assess their progress against the wellbeing indicators, supporting staff to monitor and track all young people’s wellbeing and provide better evidence of outcomes.

- The school has procedures in place to help identify young people who may require additional support for learning. Appropriate interventions are sought from the in-house Resource Allocation Meetings (RAM) and the local authority led Joint Allocation Team meetings (JAT). These interventions are regularly monitored. The school would benefit from reviewing the impact of these to ensure that they are effective. In order to further enhance the learning experiences of some young people, class teachers would benefit from advice and support in developing and delivering more differentiated learning. Opportunities such as in-service days could provide a useful time to offer additional training for staff, including support staff, which would enhance the inclusive environment and contribute to improved levels of attainment for young people.

- Parents are involved at the planning and review stages for young people with additional needs. The school offers a range of targeted interventions such as the literacy intervention programme, small group activities as appropriate, in class support and additional support for assessment. For example, this year a successful training workshop demonstrating software to support young people with dyslexia was delivered to young people and their parents. This resource is accessed at home as well as in school and has had a significant impact on the progression of young people with dyslexia. Partners speak very positively about their role within the school community, feeling valued and included in the life of the school. They talk very highly of the collaborative arrangements in place to support young people, for example the support available from South Lanarkshire’s KEAR Campus outreach staff.

- The school catering provider was not able to demonstrate that all nutrient regulations are currently being met. In addition, a few food and drink standards for lunch and outwith lunch provision are not being met. For example, provision of drinks and savoury snacks that do not meet the specification. The school and catering service should work together to address these aspects and work with young people to look at suitable alternatives.

- Although in early stages of development the school has a tool which enables it to track and monitor the progress of all young people. It enables the school to do so for individuals, cohorts and for groups of particular focus, such as those young people who are care experienced, have additional support needs or who live in datazones associated with any socio-economic disadvantage. Through this, and the subsequent discussions with staff, young people know their personal learning targets and how to improve, which is leading to improved outcomes for some young people. There are a few examples of improving patterns of attainment for young people with identified barriers to learning. However, this is inconsistent and varies year on year. The school is aware of the need to improve attainment outcomes for young people with additional support needs or who are care experienced.

- The school is currently updating its policy on positive behaviour and some staff use nurturing and restorative approaches well. The majority of young people who responded to the inspection questionnaire feel that bullying is dealt with effectively. However, a few feel that bullying is not always effectively resolved. Most feel there is someone they can go to if they feel upset or concerned about something. The school has recently revised its anti-bullying policy and a helpful next step would be to evaluate the impact of this on improving young people’s perceptions of how well bullying is dealt with. It would be beneficial for senior leaders to have a strategic overview of incidents of bullying that would allow for trends and patterns to
be analysed in order to support interventions. Exclusion rates have decreased significantly in the last three years and attendance rates are overall in line with the national averages.

Young people can talk about their understanding of discrimination and unfairness and the implications of these on others. Equality and diversity is celebrated in a number of different ways in Biggar High school. Most young people who responded to the inspection questionnaire feel that staff treat them fairly and with respect. Young people are encouraged to discuss issues related to equality and diversity in subjects areas for example, writing in an English class about related topics such as the gender pay gap. These and other activities and events are leading to young people developing a greater awareness and understanding of others and helping to develop them as responsible citizens and effective contributors to society.
3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

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:

- Figures provided by the school for the last two years show that most young people are achieving 3rd CfE level or better in literacy and by the end of S3 with the majority achieving 4th CfE level. There has been an improvement in the percentage of young people achieving numeracy at 3rd level with most of the latest S3 cohort achieving 3rd level or better in 2016/17 compared to the majority achieving in the 2015/16 S3 cohort. The majority have now also achieved 4th level in numeracy compared to less than half in 2015/16.

- Overall, staff are applying their professional judgements well. They are developing their use of moderation within departments and through professional network meetings as part of the Clydesdale group of schools. Staff are using a range of data to support their professional judgements, including predictive grades from standardised assessments.

Senior phase:

- Almost all young people have achieved both a literacy and numeracy award at SCQF level 3 or better and most or almost all have achieved at SCQF level 4 or better on leaving school in the last five years.

- The latest year has seen a decline in attainment in literacy for those leaving school at SCQF levels 4 or better and 5 or better through a course award with performance at these levels having fallen to being significantly lower than the virtual comparator (VC). Inspectors have been made aware that the school did not have a full complement of English teachers in the department at this time.

Attainment of young people in literacy by the time of leaving school:

- Almost all young people attained SCQF level 4 or better in literacy as part of a course award in three out of the latest five years, the exceptions being 2014/15 and 2016/17 where it was most. The majority attained level SCQF 5 or better as part of a course award in four of the latest five years with most achieving this in 2015/16. The majority attained SCQF level 6 in the latest three years. However, in 2014/15 and 2016/17 attainment in literacy as part of a course award at SCQF level 4 or better and in 2012/13 and 2016/17 at SCQF level 5 or better as part of a course award was significantly lower than the VC.
Attainment of young people in numeracy by the time of leaving school:
- Overall, attainment in numeracy for leavers is in line with the VC. Over the last five years, almost all young people attained numeracy at SCQF level 3 or better, most attained numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better and the majority attained numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better. However, at SCQF level 5 or better attainment through units only was significantly lower than the VC in 2015/16 and 2016/17. At SCQF level 3 or better, attainment in numeracy was significantly higher in 2012/13 and 2013/14 and much higher in 2014/15. Attainment in numeracy at SCQF level 6 has been consistently above the VC for the latest five years, being significantly higher in 2012/13. For those young people leaving from S5, attainment in numeracy at SCQF level 6 was significantly higher or much higher than the VC in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy as young people move through the school from S4 to S6:

Attainment of young people in literacy as young people move through the school:
- In S4, attainment in literacy is in line with the VC. Almost all attained literacy at SCQF level 3 or better over the last five years. Almost all attained literacy at SCQF level 4 or better in three of the last five years and the majority attained SCQF level 5 or better in four out of the last five years. The proportions achieving literacy at SCQF level 5 or better through a course award has been showing an improving trend over the latest five years.

- By S5, almost all young people attained literacy at SCQF level 4 or better in four out of the last five years with most achieving SCQF level 5 or better for in two of the last five years. Attainment in literacy in 2015/16 and 2016/17 was significantly lower than the VC at SCQF level 4 or better. Attainment of literacy at SCQF level 5 or better through a course award and at level 6 has overall been improving over the latest five years and has been in line with the VC.

- By S6, the majority of young people attained literacy at SCQF level 6 in the latest three years. In 2015/16, attainment in literacy was significantly higher than the VC at SCQF level 6.

Attainment of young people in numeracy as young people move through the school:
- In S4, almost all young people attained numeracy at SCQF level 3 or better over the last five years. Most attained numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better in four of the last five years. Less than half attained at SCQF level 5 or better in four of the last five years. Attainment in numeracy at SCQF level 3 or better was significantly higher or much higher than the VC from 2012/13 to 2014/15. In 2016/17, attainment in numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better through units only was significantly lower than the VC.

- By S5, the majority of young people attained numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better in the last five years. In 2015/16, attainment was significantly lower than the VC at SCQF level 4 or better as part of a course award and at SCQF level 5 or better when attained through units only. Overall, attainment has fluctuated but has generally been in line with the VC in the latest five years.

- By S6, attainment in numeracy at SCQF level 3 or better was significantly higher than the VC for three of the last five years. The attainment in numeracy at SCQF 4 or better and 5 or better through a course award and at level 6 has mostly been in line with the VC over the last five years.
Attainment over time

BGE:
- The school has recently introduced a new tracking system which is allowing staff to develop a greater understanding of the progress young people are making across all subject areas. This has the potential to be a very powerful tool to support improvement. Staff are tracking this information over time at an individual pupil level and use this information to identify young people who are attaining above or below expected levels. While this work is at an early stage, senior leaders are able to evidence how, through dialogue with staff, this data has influenced interventions which have led to improved performance for several young people across stages. Senior leaders are using the analysis from the tracking tool to identify areas of strength and under-performance across cohorts and at a departmental level. This is leading to improvements in performance in the BGE. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to use this data to identify the impact of interventions on individual young people’s progress and attainment.

How well is the school improving young people’s attainment as they move through senior phase in school and then to leaving school?
- The attainment in the latest five years of young people as shown by the average complementary tariff scores has been in line with the VC as they have left school. The attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of leavers is generally in line with the VC as they left school in each of the latest five years. Overall, the same can be said for the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% groups as they move through the school. The exception being the 2014/15 S4 lowest attaining 20% group which attained significantly lower than the VC. This pattern was evident by the similar group in the same cohort when they reached S5 the following year and again in S6 the year after that.

Breadth and depth:
- In S4, overall, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better and 4 or better has been in line with the VC for the latest five years with no evident improving or declining trends. The percentage of young people achieving one or more awards to six or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better at Grade C or better and Grade A or better has overall been in line with the VC in the latest five years. The percentage achieving one or more to four or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better has shown year on year improvement over the latest three years.

- By S5, most young people have attained five or more courses at SCQF level 4 or better in the latest five years with the majority attaining five or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. Most young people attained one or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better in the latest five years. At SCQF level 4 or better in 2015/16 the number of young people attaining one or more to four or more awards is significantly lower than the VC. This has improved in the latest year and is now in line with the VC. The number of young people attaining awards at SCQF level 5C or better and 5A or better is overall in line with the VC. The percentage of young people attaining one or more to five or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better and 6A or better is overall in line with the VC. In 2014/15 at SCQF level 6C or better the percentage of young people attaining one or more, three or more and four or more courses was significantly higher than the VC. In the same year the percentage achieving one or more awards at SCQF level 6A+ was also significantly higher.

- By S6, the proportions achieving two or more to six or more awards at SCQF 4 or better has been significantly declining in the school over the latest five years. Where these proportions
were in line with the VC over the five year period they have fallen to generally be below the VC in the latest year. The percentage of young people attaining one or more to seven or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better and 5A or better is in line with the VC in the latest five years. In 2014/15 at SCQF level 5C or better, the percentage of young people attaining one or more courses was significantly lower than the VC. The percentage of young people attaining one or more to five or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better is overall in line with the VC for the latest five years though was significantly higher than the VC in 2015/16 for two or more to five or more courses. The percentage of young people attaining courses at SCQF level 7 is overall in line with the VC for the latest five years.

- In S4, pass rates in almost all courses at National 4 are in line with National pass rates in 2016/17.
- In S4, almost all course at National 5 have a pass rate in line with national figures in 2016/17 with attainment in mathematics, biology and history significantly higher.
- At S5 and S6, at National 5 in 2016/17 almost all courses have a pass rate in line with national figures. At Higher in 2016/17, almost all courses have a pass rate in line with national figures.

**Overall quality of learners’ achievement:**

- The school and wider community offer a wide range of good opportunities for young people to enhance their skills and achievements. Senior leaders pay particular cognisance of the rural context of the school catchment and have worked successfully to place the school at the heart of the community. These opportunities provide a highly positive vehicle for young people to engage with each other and the wider community and to develop the skills and attributes of the four capacities of a Curriculum for Excellence.

- Young people increase their communication, team working and social skills and have higher self-esteem as a result of taking part in a wide range of achievement activities both in the school and in their communities. In addition to community activities, the school runs a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs.

- Young people’s confidence, social networks and pride in themselves and their school are increased through participation in competitions and performances at local, regional and national level. These activities include sports, performing arts, science and business challenges, agricultural shows and local festivals. Recent successes such as the under-18s girls rugby team winning the Scottish Schools Championships and the school achieving its second Sports Scotland Gold Award increase awareness of what can be achieved and raise aspirations.

- Young people contribute effectively to the life of the school and the wider community. Young people in S5 and S6 volunteer at Biggar Youth Project, working alongside adults to run the popular lunchtime sessions attended by around fifty young people from S1 to S5 each day. Young people in the leadership team run the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Antony Nolan charity campaign. As a result of this work seventy young people have registered with the bone marrow trust. Over the last three years around ten young people per year have supported the learning of younger pupils by being literacy, numeracy and language buddies and ambassadors. Another thirty were S1 buddies this year. Thirty young people in S6 are working towards gaining level 5 Preparing To Volunteer awards by volunteering with younger children and young people and in local hospitals and care homes.
The school recognises, celebrates and shares many of the achievements of young people. Annual whole school awards events highlight academic, sporting, musical and wider successes and efforts demonstrated by young people.

Young people would benefit from the school working with partners to systematically track young people’s achievements and participation in learning beyond the classroom. This would enable the school and partners to identify and then support any young people who are not participating. It would also support the school and partners to work together to recognise and build on the skills young people gain across learning experiences.

Young people have a greater awareness of the wider world and increase their citizenship skills through programmes run by themselves, the school and its partners. Young people in S3 gain an insight into both Scottish and other countries system of justice through a programme which includes guest speakers and an annual visit to Shotts Prison. This supports them to reflect on the choices they make about their lives as well as understand other people’s lives better. Young people running the school Amnesty Club are proactive in campaigning for change and in supporting other young people to get involved.

Partners contribute to the curriculum and increase the variety of learning experiences young people have. The School of Rugby enables more young people in S1 and 2, including a growing number of girls, to experience and develop sporting excellence in rugby. Young people value the inputs partners deliver as part of PSE. Young people’s wellbeing and inclusion is supported through a range of groups and activities such as the Young Carers group and S1 August to December lunch club at Biggar Youth Project. Young people in S2 undertake a food and drink challenge delivered by a local business. This builds their capacity to be enterprising and work to and understand real-life business requirements.

The school have a useful range of partnerships which support employability. Work with SDS, ASPIRE, the Rotary Club and a range of regional employers is well co-ordinated and has a clear focus on the next steps in learning or work. Employer visits, careers advice and partner sponsored competitions are usefully engaged from S1, encouraging young people to plan and make decisions around their post school careers.

Despite good levels of volunteering and participation only a few young people currently gain national achievement awards. The school and partners should now explore ways to support more young people to gain such awards. This would increase young people’s recognition and awareness of of their progress, learning and contribution. For many young people such awards will also support them to reach their planned post school careers.

Equity for all learners:

The new tracking system includes a range of data such as Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data along with local intelligence to identify young people who may be experiencing barriers to learning. The school is aware of the need to use this data to identify any gaps in attainment between young people living with disadvantage and their peers. This will enable the school to identify, plan and evaluate interventions which will have the greatest impact to close any gaps in attainment.

The school is able to demonstrate a reduction in exclusion over the last five years. The school is on track this session to be in line or lower than the national average level of exclusions. The school should continue to work to reduce the number of exclusions.
The school’s current plans for its Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) involves implementation of a mentoring programme, a nurture programme, develop literacy and numeracy support materials and develop targeted study support for learning. These developments are at the early stage. It is therefore too early for the school to have evidence of impact of these approaches on improving outcomes for young people. Staff involved in the mentoring and nurture programmes should consider how they will measure this impact and what baseline data they require to gather to do this.

Attainment vs Deprivation:
- Attainment for those young people leaving school is overall in line with young people living in similar datazones elsewhere in Scotland based on average complementary tariff scores.

- In S4, The attainment of young people who live in SIMD 4 (which is 15 % of the school population) was significantly higher than that of young people nationally in datazones with the same decile designation in two of the latest five years. By S5, The attainment of young people who live in SIMD 4 was significantly higher or much higher than that of young people nationally in datazones with the same decile designation in three of the latest five years.

How well is the school improving or maintaining positive destinations for all leavers:
- The destination indicators compare well with local and national comparators. This is supported well through a clear commitment to developing young people’s career management skills. The highly effective work through useful guidance, well-structured and comprehensive support from SDS and the additional contribution from ASPIRE have supported the school well in ensuring positive destinations for almost all young people on leaving school.

- In three of the latest five years almost all leavers have left school for a positive destination. In the latest year 2016/17 all young people who left school moved on to a positive destination which was significantly higher than the VC. The proportions moving on to a positive destination on leaving school is a key strength of the school.
Setting choice of QI: 2.6 Transitions

This indicator focuses on the need for children and young people to be well supported as they move into school, through school and beyond school. Effective partnership working, tracking of progress and robust record keeping are essential to support continuity in learning at points of transition. That continuity is crucial to maximising children and young people’s successes and ensuring the most appropriate post-school destination. The themes are:

- Arrangements to support learners and their families
- Collaborative planning and delivery
- Continuity and progression in learning

The school works to ensure a high-quality transition programme from primary to secondary school. This involves a well-planned range of pastoral, social and curricular programmes developed over a period of time to ensure a smooth transition from P6 to S1. This includes a focus on enterprise and STEM activities and a three-day induction visit, all of which are valued by both parents and young people. The opportunity afforded by the transition programme for peers to meet is recognised as very important for children, given the geographic spread of the catchment area. Effective collaboration across the learning community ensures that a range of information is collated throughout the P7 year during visits by pupil support staff, senior leaders and subject specialist staff. This has an appropriate emphasis on ensuring a high level of social and emotional support for all children. S1 young people are supported by senior pupils to provide a helpful buddy system which includes buddy lunches. Feedback from young people confirms the success of this varied programme.

Well-established enhanced transition programmes support young people from associated primary schools who have additional support needs. Sound arrangements are in place to ensure continuity of planning and review for individual young people. Members of the wider support team, in particular the home school partnership worker, successfully contribute to this. Questionnaire responses confirm that individual young people who have joined mid-session value the support and care received during the settling-in period. Partners talk highly of the bespoke support which the school provides for both young people and parents.

The school is continuing to develop creative approaches to transition. This includes introducing activities such as a DYW project which encourages P7 learners to widen their horizons about future choices. These projects involve senior school DYW ambassadors working with children. Other projects include Scots Language, Family Learning, and Science and Art, ‘Trout at Transition’, working alongside biologists from University of Glasgow.

Staff from primary and secondary schools collaborate to help develop continuity and progression in curricular areas. They also meet to discuss standards in literacy and numeracy. Progression pathways in experiences and outcomes in mathematics have been considered and should be reviewed in line with the National Benchmarks. Moderation sessions in literacy have focussed on standards in writing using the National Benchmarks. Moderation work has also taken place with the PE department and the primary schools with a focus on performance. Work should now take place to progress moderation activity collegiately across the learning community, supporting a shared understanding on achieving a level using the appropriate National Benchmarks.
P7 profiles are continuing to be developed and share the skills and interests of the child. These could now contribute to the establishment of a baseline for monitoring and tracking wider achievements. S3 profiles support target setting across the school.

The school’s current arrangements for specialisation at the end of S2 do not ensure that all young people receive their entitlement to a broad general education in S3. Senior leaders have plans to review this in consultation with young people, parents and staff. This will be addressed for the 2018/19 academic session.

In the senior phase, young people are given a good number of useful opportunities to reflect on and plan for their destination of choice such as college, employment or university. Visits to national events, guest speakers from university and former pupils sharing their experiences all contribute to help young people feel more confident and equipped to make well-informed decisions. An S3/4 Careers Day brings together different employment sectors with local employers. Rotary work with S6 pupils helps develop young people’s interview skills. The ASPIRE programme supports young people through bespoke plans to ensure a positive destination. The strong focus on supporting all young people to achieve this has resulted commendably in all young people who left last session now in a positive destination.
Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality are used in this report:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost all</td>
<td>91%-99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>75%-90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>50%-74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority/less than half</td>
<td>15%-49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few</td>
<td>less than 15%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.