

# Summarised inspection findings

**Braes High School**

Falkirk Council

23 January 2024

## Key contextual information

School Name: Braes High School  
Council: Falkirk Council  
SEED number: 5746531  
Roll (Sep 2023): 1074

Braes High School is located in the town of Falkirk. The school has six associated primary schools. In September 2022, 6.8% of pupils lived in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In February 2023, 13.3% of pupils were registered for free school meals. In September 2022, the school reported that 30% of pupils had additional support needs.

The headteacher has been in post for over eight years. He is supported by five depute head teachers, four of whom are full-time and three of whom are in substantive posts. Attendance is generally above the national average. Exclusions are generally below the national average.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

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

- The headteacher and staff have created a very positive climate for learning in Braes High School. As a result, young people are highly motivated, participate well and demonstrate strong learning routines. Young people demonstrate positive relationships with their peers and staff. Parents and young people value highly supported study sessions and additional revision activities which staff put in place to support learners. Young people are proud of their school and almost all young people feel valued and supported by their teachers. Almost all learners say that staff encourage them to do their very best.
- Most teachers plan tasks and activities which motivate and engage learners. Teachers use a variety of approaches that involve young people learning independently, working collaboratively with peers and making use of digital technology. Across the school, staff plan to meet the needs of learners primarily through in-class teacher support and by outcome. In the Broad General Education (BGE), teachers need to set tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty for young people more consistently. Young people would benefit from increased levels of challenge in the BGE.
- Teachers use digital technology in creative and wide-ranging ways. They enhance the learning experiences of the learners and upload useful materials on a variety of platforms. In this way they promote independent learning, giving young people personalisation and choice in how they can present and consolidate their learning. The use of digital technologies also assists young people who need support for their learning. In a few lessons, teachers demonstrate highly effective practice in how they use this technology. Staff should continue to promote these approaches in engaging learners. The school has achieved the digital schools, Digital Cluster and Digital Well Being Awards to recognise the strong approaches to digital learning.
- Almost all teachers have a clear structure to their lessons. Teachers share the purpose of lessons and what successful learning looks like, although the quality of this is inconsistent across the school. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not sufficiently link the learning intentions and criteria to evaluate success in learning. Teachers should make more effective use of plenaries to support young people to reflect on their learning.
- Most staff use formative assessment strategies well. These include questioning, peer to peer modelling, scanning work and talking to groups and individuals to check for understanding. In a few lessons, teachers make effective use of questioning to support young people to develop higher-order thinking skills. Almost all staff use formal assessment methods well to check for understanding such as end of unit tests. An important next step for the school is for all teachers to check for understanding on a day-to-day basis. They should then use this assessment evidence to help inform subsequent planning of learning, teaching and assessment. The

school should build on strong practice that exists in a few departments to ensure all teachers plan more effectively to meet the needs of all learners.

- Staff have a strong understanding of how well their learners are progressing through the senior phase. Faculty and senior leaders have robust processes in place that enable them to identify young people who are at risk of underachieving. These inform a range of whole-school strategies to support young people, including study support groups, parental engagement, and digital revision packs. Teachers should consider further how this monitoring and tracking information is used to support learners' progress within their class.
- Teachers provide feedback to learners on a regular basis through a variety of techniques, including digitally. Parents and young people receive regular tracking reports. In the senior phase, these allow most young people to discuss work required to progress their learning. Staff at Braes High School track progress within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels as bronze, silver, and gold. These definitions are shared with young people and help to motivate learners to progress through the levels. Teachers should consider how use of these levels will help young people in the BGE better understand of their strengths and next steps in learning.
- Staff are developing their understanding of national standards with their colleagues within the school and with primary colleagues, including cluster work on moderation activities. Teachers recognise the need to work with more colleagues outwith the school to ensure a shared understanding of standards.
- Staff display a strong understanding of assessment standards in National Qualifications. This enables them to co-construct targets with learners and plan learning that supports young people to achieve these. Teachers achieve this through regular subject and faculty moderation activities and the sharing of standards by those involved in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) duties. They also engage in professional learning opportunities within the school, local authority and nationally. Learners in the senior phase have a strong understanding of their strengths and next steps in learning. Regular discussions between staff and young people support this well. As a result, most young people in the senior phase display self-directed learning within and outwith the classroom. They are motivated to make progress in their learning.
- All teachers use the learning, teaching and assessment framework to improve experiences and outcomes for learners. They frequently meet in practitioner enquiry groups to share and develop their classroom practice. Teachers lead the development and delivery of an extensive professional learning programme designed to meet the needs of all colleagues. The school is well placed to build on the strengths of their collegiate ethos and continue to build on their strengths in learning, teaching and assessment.

## 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

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

### 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very good

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

- Young people are attaining very well in literacy and numeracy and sustaining these high standards over time. By the end of S3, almost all young people are achieving third Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level or better in all literacy measures and numeracy. This high level of achievement has been sustained over the last three years. In 2022-23, by the end of S3, the majority of young people achieved fourth CfE level in all literacy measures and numeracy.
- Teachers have developed a strategy for the development of literacy and numeracy skills as the responsibility of all teachers. As a result, other curriculum areas have audited their courses against literacy and numeracy experiences and outcomes. They also provide assessment evidence in aspects of literacy and numeracy which support professional judgements. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that all staff have a shared understanding of standards of literacy and numeracy.

#### Senior phase

##### Leavers

- Most young people are attaining exceptionally well in literacy and numeracy by the time they leave school. Across the school community, staff recognise the importance of a relentless focus on literacy and numeracy. This has led to high attainment which has been sustained over the last five years.
- Almost all young people left school with Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better in literacy over the five years from 2017/18 to 2021/22. This is significantly higher than the Virtual Comparator (VC) in all of these years and significantly much higher in four of them. Almost all young people left school with SCQF level 5 or better and most left with SCQF level 6 or better in literacy in these five years. This is significantly much higher than the VC in all five of these years.
- Almost all young people left school with SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy over the five years from 2017/18 to 2021/22. This is significantly higher than the Virtual Comparator (VC) in three of these years and significantly much higher in two of them. Most young people left school with SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in these five years. This is significantly much higher than the VC in all five of these years.

## Cohorts

- As young people move through the senior phase, they are consistently attaining very high standards in literacy and numeracy in S4, S5 and S6. In literacy, for these three year groups based on the S4 roll, attainment has been sustained as significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC at SCQF levels 4,5 and 6. In numeracy, for all three year groups, attainment has been sustained as significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC at SCQF levels 4 and 5. Attainment is in line with the VC at SCQF level 6.

## Attainment over time

### BGE

- At the time of the school's tracking period in February, almost all young people are achieving third CfE level or better in the majority of curriculum areas outwith literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics. A minority of departments show an improvement in the percentage of young people attaining third CfE level from 2021/22 to 2022/23. Senior leaders should now track the percentage of young people achieving third CfE level or better by the end of S3. This will provide a more reliable account of young people's progress.

## Senior phase

- Staff present learners for a wide range of SCQF qualifications, including National Qualifications, other SQA qualifications and those from providers other than the SQA. Senior leaders need to review the number of courses young people are presented for to ensure that young people maximise success. Young people in S4 are presented for a significantly higher number of SCQF qualifications than the national average. Although young people do well in National Qualifications, it is important for senior leaders to identify the value added by additional courses to young people's attainment, learner pathways and experiences.
- Based on average complementary tariff scores, the performance of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers was significantly higher than the VC in 2021/22. This high performance has been sustained as it has been significantly higher or significantly much higher since 2018/19. The performance of the middle attaining 60% has been in line with the VC for the last five years and the highest attaining 20% has been in line with the VC for four of the last five years.
- Staff across the school have had a relentless focus on ensuring that young people with barriers to their learning are identified. They provide appropriate interventions and course provision to support learners who need it. As young people move through S4-S6, based on complementary tariff scores, attainment for the lowest attaining 20% has consistently outperformed VC. In S4 it has been significantly much higher than VC for the last five years. For young people in S5 based on the S4 roll attainment has been significantly higher or significantly much higher for the last four years. For young people in S6 based on the S4 roll attainment has been significantly higher for the last three years.
- As young people move through S4-S6, based on complementary tariff scores, attainment for the middle attaining 60% of young people in S4 is significantly above VC in 2022/23. The middle attaining 60% of young people in S5 and S6 based on the S4 roll have attained in line with VC for the last five years. The highest attaining 20% of young people in S4 and in S5 as part of the S4 roll have also attained in line with the VC for the last five years, and in S6 this has improved to be in line with the VC for 2022/23. Senior leaders should now consider how their learner pathways best support further improving the quality of attainment for the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of learners.



## Breadth and depth

- Across almost all curriculum areas, the percentages of young people presented for National Qualifications at National 4, National 5 and Higher are generally in line with or significantly higher than the national average in 2022/23.
- At S4 young people have sustained very high standards of attainment at SCQF level 4 or better in National Qualifications and Skills for Work courses over time. Most young people achieve seven or more courses at this level or better, which has improved from being significantly higher than VC to significantly much higher. The percentage of young people attaining four or more SCQF level 5 passes in these courses has been significantly higher than the VC for three of the last five years. For seven or more of these courses, it has been significantly higher than the VC for the last five years. At SCQF 5A or better in these courses, the percentage gaining two to seven or more courses is broadly in line with the VC.
- By S5, the majority of young people have achieved six or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better in National Qualifications and Skills for Work courses since 2018/19. This is in line with the VC. The number of young people achieving six or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better has also been in line with the VC. Young people attaining five or more awards at SCQF level 6C and 6A had also remained broadly in line with the VC. However, attainment has dropped to be significantly lower than the VC in 2022/23 for young people achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 6A.
- By S6, the majority of young people have achieved six or more awards SCQF level 5 or better in National Qualifications and Skills for Work courses since 2018/19. Attainment has improved so that in 2022/23 this is significantly much higher than the VC. The number of young people achieving six or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better has been in line with the VC for the last four years. Young people attaining five or more awards at SCQF level 6C and 6A have also remained broadly in line with the VC since 2019/20. Young people achieving 3 courses at SCQF level 7C or better has been broadly in line with the VC, except for 2021/22 when this was significantly lower. Overall, the percentage of young people attaining A grades at SCQF level 5 and level 6 remain in line with the VC. There is scope for improvement in this area.

## Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people take part in an extensive range of activities and programmes across the school. They actively contribute to the life of the school. Staff use bespoke electronic systems to record and track achievements both in and outwith school. Learners who do not participate are identified and encouraged by staff. Almost all young people gain SCQF recognition for wider achievement in the senior phase. Staff have successfully created a large range of well-planned programmes to enable an increasing number of young people to undertake nationally recognised achievement programmes. Almost all young people take part in achievements across the school. Senior leaders have a very well-established system that demonstrates increasing numbers of young people taking part in achievement over time.
- Young people are developing a range of skills, attributes and values through the commendable range of achievements across the school. Young people are developing team working skills, their resilience, motivation and curiosity as learners. Young people are also demonstrating very strong leadership skills through their leadership roles such as pupil council, House duties, and as SCQF ambassadors. Young people lead wider achievement groups such as Rights Respecting Schools. Young people use these skills in other contexts such as supporting events in the school. The Sports Leaders deliver activities to primary seven pupils to support transition. Young people are also developing their confidence through performances at the Braes Youth Theatre. Senior leaders should build on this impressive range of achievements by continuing with the current refreshment of the skills framework. This has the potential to



support further how young people discuss the skills they are gaining through participation in these out of class activities.

- The school recognises and celebrates success effectively. This is evident through motivational wall displays, a range of award ceremonies for different cohorts of learners, the school newsletter, and social media sites geared towards parents. Young people value the recognition given to all types of achievement within and outwith the school.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Staff have a very good knowledge of young people and their individual needs and circumstances. Staff take account of the context of young people's personal circumstances and try to reduce barriers to accessing aspects of school life. Although attendance has fallen mildly since the Covid-19 pandemic, there are no specific issues with attendance and staff work hard to encourage and support positive attendance.
- The school ensures equity of access to opportunities through well considered and planned use of PEF and the support of the 'FAB' parents' group. This allows all young people to be fully included in opportunities for different experiences and visits.
- The Onwards and Upwards strategy is supporting young people whose learning has been affected by poverty. It has successfully developed a whole school approach to equity. For example, the school is making good progress in reducing the 'cost of the school day' for young people and their families. This includes providing support for school trips, uniform and home learning resources. Working with partners, the school has engaged with parents, and supported them in their own learning.
- Almost all young people move onto a positive destination. This has been broadly in line with the VC for all of the last five years.

## Other relevant evidence

- The school library service works well with young people to ensure it is a supportive resource for all learners. Young people have had a leadership role in ensuring the library's literature provision takes account of the culture of the school.
- All young people receive their national entitlements to religious and moral education, physical education, personal and social education and the 1+2 entitlement in modern languages.

## 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.