

# Summarised inspection findings

**Dumfries High School**

Dumfries and Galloway Council

10 December 2019

School Name: Dumfries High School  
Council: Dumfries and Galloway Council  
SEED number: 5939232  
Roll (Sep 2018): 772

Attendance is generally above the national average.  
In 2017/18 the exclusion figures were decreasing and were below the national average.  
In February 2019 7.2 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.  
In September 2018 3.4 per cent of pupils live in 20 per cent most deprived datazones in Scotland.  
In September 2018 the school reported that 31 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

## Key contextual information

The current headteacher has been in post for two years. In the five years prior to this there were a number of changes of headteacher. This led to a period of instability which has now settled. There are three depute heads and a school business manager.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The present senior leadership is an enthusiastic team who along with staff are working together to improve the life chances of all their learners. The school's core values of ambition and respect are a positive reference point for learners. Most learners demonstrate these values well, though a significant minority of learners have still to engage fully. The headteacher is passionate about securing the best outcomes for every young person in the school. Senior and middle leaders operate an open door policy to continue to build a climate of trust with parents, learners and all other stakeholders.
- The headteacher has been in post for two years. He has a focus on raising aspirations and maximising each young person's potential through his aim to improve attainment and achievement. The headteacher and senior leaders provide complementary skills to support the work of the school and this is respected by staff and learners. Staff are now beginning to have a stronger sense of purpose, and are keen to participate in improvement activities which will help the school to move forward.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team need to develop, and articulate, a clear, strategic vision for change which identifies appropriate priorities. Analysis and use of evidence is required to ensure a much stronger focus on setting priorities which can provide measurable impact.
- In the last two years many new initiatives and processes have been put in place. Staff should now evaluate these initiatives and reflect on progress before making further changes. Staff are ready to deepen their use of self-evaluation strategies, to provide clearer analysis of the school's strengths and the areas they need to improve. Self-evaluation processes including the use of surveys are developing. Going forward, staff should put in place learner and parent conversations focused on agreeing whole school priorities. The whole school priorities should include measurable timed action points linked directly to improved learning and teaching.
- Most faculty/department heads (middle leaders) provide effective leadership in their departments. Regular department meetings with senior leaders enable the sharing of departmental development work. Middle leaders complete a range of quality assurance activities including the analysis of SQA data and observation of learning. This is beginning to support evaluative work and staff should continue to develop this type of activity. Further strategies are needed at senior level to ensure that attainment analysis leads to agreed department actions and that these are overtaken within agreed timescales and by named staff. To date, classroom observations have a strong focus on behaviour and classroom management. They need now to be focussed on the evaluation of pace and challenge in the classroom and on learners successful acquisition of skills.

- The current school improvement plan has a focus on raising attainment, improving learning and teaching, curriculum development and increased expectations in literacy and numeracy. Links between the school improvement plan and subject improvement plans are made clear. Planning for improvement aligns with the National Improvement Framework, local authority and school priorities. Improvement planning should continue to be widened to involve learners and all other stakeholders including partners. Overall, improvement planning is not yet highlighting clearly enough the changes which are needed to bring about improvements. Strategies to monitor and evaluate outcomes and impact should be evaluated more rigorously and robustly.
- Senior leaders, middle leaders and staff benefit from the developing culture of collegiate working. They demonstrate a shared purpose and a drive to improve learning and teaching. The recent creation of working groups for staff is developing a stronger climate of professional trust. Ten working groups are in place this session with actions linked to school improvement targets. A few of the working groups would benefit from having their remits widened and linked to clearer measurable targets.
- Most teachers undertake relevant in-school and out-of-school career long professional learning. A professional learning calendar offers a wide range of learning opportunities. Most of the sessions are linked to targets within the school improvement plan. The sessions also provide staff leadership opportunities as well as deepening staff knowledge through, for example, digital learning workshops.
- As a result of focussed staff and learner dialogue a new 'House' structure is now in place to support the developing culture and ethos and provide a sense of stability for learners. Further quality assurance of the house system is needed to ensure consistent messages across year groups and that all young people have someone to speak to when experiencing challenges. A minority of learners did not feel the school takes their views into account or listens to their views. Learners would welcome being consulted and supported to be more involved in school improvement. They have clear ideas about the school's strengths and what the school could improve but feel they have limited opportunities to share these views or contribute to the school's vision and values.
- Young people have a range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills. This includes leading the Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI), being My World of Work Ambassadors, classroom buddies and Science Technology Engineering and Maths Ambassadors. These opportunities are enabling young people to play a part in improving their local community. Staff should continue to develop leadership skills for every learner.
- The school has set out clear plans for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). This funding supports additional staffing three days a week to provide targeted provision in literacy and numeracy for identified young people. Staff have produced benchmarked assessments to demonstrate the positive impact from this work. In addition, the Dumfries High School of Football partnership with a local team is improving the health and wellbeing of a few learners as well as providing them with formal accreditation.
- The Parent Council supports the work of the school. They engage well together, raising funds to support school activities including supporting young enterprise projects and funding for residential visits. A few parents feel that they would like to be more involved in supporting their child's learning.
- The school works with a large number of partners in the local community, including business partners who extend opportunities for young people. Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) business partners engage in joint self-evaluation and planning for improvement within a clear

structure led by the DYW manager. The school has recognised that a similar approach needs to be developed for other aspects of partnership work and that more needs to be done to build a full overview of the impact of partnerships.

## 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

- Staff create a positive and caring ethos to support and nurture young people. This is underpinned by the school's core values of ambition and respect. These values are demonstrated through the positive relationships between most staff and young people. Learning and teaching is an important priority for the school and work is ongoing in this area.
- Most young people are well behaved and the majority engage with their learning. When young people have opportunities to work in pairs and groups, they interact well and achieve success. Providing more opportunities for collaborative working would improve learners' experiences. In a minority of lessons, a few young people disengage from learning through low-level disruptive behaviour which impacts negatively on the learning of others. Staff should ensure the promotion of positive behaviour strategies are implemented consistently and that learning is sufficiently challenging to ensure all young people are engaged and on task.
- Senior students offer helpful classroom support in health and wellbeing and registration and pupils from various stages deliver assemblies. Peer support is offered by senior pupils in a number of broad general education (BGE) classes. Younger learners benefit from this interaction and older students are able to demonstrate their leadership skills. Staff should extend the opportunities to lead learning across all year groups to ensure all young people are able to be effective contributors and successful learners.
- Overall, the quality of learning and teaching is too variable. Examples of strong and effective practice should be shared across the school. Most lesson activities are teacher-led with learners being too passive. Staff support learning through well-established routines but almost all lessons would benefit from increased pace and challenge. Teachers should use more open questions to promote higher-order thinking and to extend responses. Tasks should focus on skills development or stimulating thinking and problem-solving in learners. In a few departments, low-level tasks such as copying notes and colouring do not support learning. Most teachers provide clear instructions, explanations and teaching points. The balance of teacher and pupil talk should now be reviewed to allow more active learner engagement in lessons. All teachers should continue to ensure the purpose of learning is made explicit by relating it to skills for learning, life and work.
- Most staff offer additional support beyond timetabled lessons to help young people in their learning and to address gaps in understanding. Parents and young people speak positively about the annual event focusing on exam preparation for National Qualifications (NQs). They value the support provided by teachers. In the BGE, reducing barriers to learning assistants support individual young people in classes. A greater focus on ensuring all learners' needs are met is required. Almost all teachers need to develop approaches to differentiation leading to appropriate support and challenge for every learner.

- The majority of teachers use digital technologies well to support lesson delivery. In a few examples, young people are using technology and benefiting from more frequent interactive contexts to support learning. This good practice should be encouraged and shared more widely across the school.
- Staff are currently reviewing the school's learning and teaching policy to ensure an agreed shared understanding of standards and expectations and to encourage consistency across the school. Staff should consider how the purpose of learning is shared and reviewed with learners to make sure it is clear to all. An important step would also be to consider how plenaries are used and how the views of learners are sought and acted upon in classrooms. Senior leaders have established a number of staff working groups to explore key aspects of learning and teaching. Middle leaders observe learning and offer feedback to staff within their departments. Senior leaders would benefit from working with all staff to develop a plan of focused classroom visits to help identify best practice and areas requiring improvement.
- Most departments are engaging with the National Benchmarks to support assessment and moderation. In the BGE, a few departments are employing a range of assessments to ascertain progress in learning. This practice needs to be extended across the school to avoid over-reliance on end of unit tests. Assessments should be used to better support learners to identify their next steps in learning. In the senior phase, most teachers show a good understanding of assessment requirements within courses and use approaches that support young people to make progress towards gaining NQs. In a few departments, effective feedback being offered to young people about their learning helps them to improve. Teachers need to consider other feedback approaches such as the types of comments on work in jotters and having learner conversations to ensure all young people understand their progress and next steps. All learners would benefit from more time to reflect on their learning and to discuss their progress.
- A planned strategic approach to moderation in partnership with associated primary schools has been developed to support staff to agree standards in literacy and numeracy. This should be extended into all areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers report on learners' progress to parents at set times across the academic year. These reports focus on the work covered and next steps. Staff should continue to develop reports to ensure they provide young people and parents with more specific advice on the skills young people are developing.
- In the senior phase, most departments track the progress of young people and respond to the data with interventions to improve outcomes for learners. School leaders should ensure all departments have effective systems in place for collating data on young people's progress and attainment. In the BGE, a more detailed and rigorous approach to monitoring and tracking is required.
- For learners at all stages, staff should reflect on how they use data to set targets, to determine learners' progress and identify and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Senior leaders acknowledge that presently practice is inconsistent. Middle and senior leaders should develop a staged intervention approach which identifies appropriate actions for young people at risk of not achieving success. All staff should be clear in their responsibility for offering support, monitoring and evaluating the action taken and agreeing next steps for learners.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff have been updating the curriculum as an important lever for driving improvement in attainment. Recent improvements made to the curriculum have created momentum for further positive changes.
- Young people moving to Dumfries High School from P7 benefit from a transition programme that involves visits to the school and some subject specialist input. Senior leaders identify the need to extend such working to support continuity and progression in learning.
- Young people at the BGE experience learning across all eight curriculum areas and the four contexts for learning. Staff need to continue to ensure that entitlements to all experiences and outcomes across the curriculum are fully met. Most learning is planned as whole class activities, thus limiting opportunities for more individualised pathways. Most curriculum areas experienced in S1 and S2 are planned around third level experiences and outcomes (Es and Os). Every department should ensure that learning is planned based on the Es and Os. In S1, there is a well-established interdisciplinary learning (IDL) programme with a focus on sciences, technologies, engineering, arts and mathematics and this should also now be built around Es and Os. Staffing difficulties mean young people are not learning in home economics in S1.
- In S1 and S2 young people have opportunities to reflect and develop their skills through all curriculum areas. At S1, young people receive an additional period for further development of literacy and numeracy skills. At S2, young people experience a dedicated period of 'Building Learning Power' (BLP). The quality of the additional periods in numeracy and BLP is variable. Staff now need to evaluate the impact and added value of these additional periods.
- Young people make choices towards the end of S2 for specialisation in S3, taking forward courses which will lead to qualifications in S4. The school ensures that pathways remain open for the few learners who wish to change subject choices at S4. The S3 experience ensures that young people continue to experience breadth in their learning. In S3 young people personalise their curriculum with six course choices in addition to English, mathematics and languages. Young people experience learning planned mostly around fourth level Es and Os during specialisation. Teachers are at an early stage of monitoring and tracking young people's progress through the BGE. As monitoring and tracking develops, staff should ensure that young people progress to appropriate learning pathways in the senior phase, based on prior knowledge, skills and achievement.
- By the end of S3 young people complete a learning profile capturing their attainment and personal achievements. Young people are encouraged to reflect on their learning journey by writing a personal statement. However they are not yet making connections between this profile and their skills development.
- There are a few effective examples of learning outdoors for example in science and social subjects. Young people would benefit from more regular opportunities to experience outdoor learning in a wider range of curriculum areas.
- Literacy resources are available for use by teachers across the school. A literacy link is identified in each department. Tracking and monitoring and moderation arrangements for literacy are effective. Young people benefit from regular visits to the school library. It provides a wide range of literature in a welcoming and nurturing environment. Young people also use this resource well during class time and break times to work independently.



- Numeracy is at the early stages of development as the responsibility of all staff. Staff understand they now need to produce a strategic improvement plan and coherent numeracy policy to provide clarity on the place of numeracy as the responsibility of all staff. Teachers are beginning to use National Benchmarks to plan assessment strategies and record the skills young people are achieving.
- Health and wellbeing is not yet well coordinated across the school and a more strategic approach to planning, integrating the PSE programme is now needed.
- The senior phase offer of qualifications and awards has been increased in recent years. This has been supported through work with partners and engagement with the Dumfries Learning Town Project. The common timetable has enabled the linking of the town's four secondary schools, local colleges. The purpose built educational facility 'The Bridge', has provided opportunities for young people that would otherwise not have been available to them. The school also became an SCQF ambassador school in 2019.
- Most young people at S4 study for six qualifications and the majority at SCQF level 5. In S5 and S6, young people are given the opportunity to study up to five qualifications. These increasingly comprise a mixture of NQS and other SCQF rated courses. In 2018/19 young people at the senior phase had a choice of study in 57 different courses. These ranged from National 4 to Advanced Higher and Higher National Certificate.
- Young people in S4, S5 and S6 are timetabled together where appropriate. This means that in a few classes, for example those studying at SCQF level 5, young people from each of the three year groups learn together. As a result, the school has increasing flexibility for individualised pathways and a suite of courses at different levels is on offer for all young people in the senior phase. Staff should continue to develop opportunities for individualised pathways for young people as need arises.
- The school has expanded the range of vocational pathways available in the senior phase. Learners can choose from a range of vocational programmes such as digital gaming and electrical engineering, delivered at 'The Bridge' or Dumfries and Galloway College. In addition, animal care, rural skills and veterinary terminology are offered by Barony Campus. However, uptake of these options by senior phase pupils is quite low. Fourteen young people, were enrolled on five different Foundation Apprenticeship programmes being delivered by staff from the local authority and Dumfries and Galloway College.
- Young people in S6 are not currently experiencing learning in religious and moral education (RME) in line with statutory guidance.
- A range of multi-level classes across all curriculum areas are in place this session. The impact of this depends on the subject being taught. Some teachers report that they are not able to give groups of young people within classes the required time and attention as teaching time is split. Sometimes this is due to courses having different content and sometimes it is due to different assessment requirements at different levels. Some teachers report a positive effect of bi-level teaching in their subject.
- Digital activities are enhancing some aspects of senior phase learning. Examples include young people being able to personalise their learning through distance learning. This includes a few young people at S6 engaging in the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme which gives them an opportunity to study an Open University module. A few young people are unable to gain digital access during study which is limiting their ability to undertake independent learning in school.

- Effective arrangements are in place for the promotion of careers advice and guidance to young people. This is primarily delivered through effective partnership arrangements with Skills Development Scotland (SDS). The few care-experienced young people in the school are supported well in choosing and following appropriate learning pathways matched to their needs and aspirations. The proportions of S4 leavers has been higher than the Virtual Comparator (VC) for the latest three years. These young people left school for an initial positive destination, mainly moving on to further education.
- Although individual departments engage and support a range of partnership activities involving employability skills, a whole school overview is not yet in place. As a result, young people are not learning to apply their skills in a range of contexts and make relevant connections between their learning in school and the world of work.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- See choice QI 2.7 below.

## 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 as a matter for urgency.

### 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

- Most young people experience positive relationships with staff and partners. In most classes interactions between staff and young people are positive and supportive. However, relationships between young people are not consistently supporting their ability to engage with learning. The recently adopted house structure is beginning to strengthen young people's sense of belonging and feeling valued. Pupil support staff regularly discuss young people's barriers to learning and seek to put measures in place to meet their needs.
- Staff have an awareness of, and are responsive to, the wellbeing needs of young people. The school is at an early stage of developing a shared understanding of the language of wellbeing. Wellbeing indicators are being used by pupil support staff to plan appropriate interventions for young people. Senior leaders are aware of the need to develop a whole school approach to wellbeing which will support all young people in their understanding of being safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Senior leaders should also consider how to develop effective tracking and monitoring of wellbeing to demonstrate improved outcomes for young people.
- Most young people feel the school helps them to understand and respect others. However, a few express concerns about feeling safe and issues of bullying. Senior leaders should continue, as planned, to review the school's approaches to anti-bullying. This should include consultations with all of the school community and could sit within the wider context of young people's rights and promoting positive relationships. Senior leaders should use available data more effectively to inform their practice in relation to incidents of bullying.
- Universal support is provided through a mentoring initiative which facilitates regular contact with a significant adult for all young people. Most young people comment that they have someone to speak to if they require support. Senior leaders should ensure they develop a shared understanding of how the mentoring initiative is leading to improved wellbeing outcomes for young people. The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) initiative introduced recently, is providing S5 and S6 pupils with the opportunity to work with and support S1 pupils. As a result of this initiative, young people are developing their leadership skills.
- A significant minority of young people feel that the school does not listen to their views and take their views into account. Senior leaders should consider building on existing opportunities for young people to influence change and improvements within the school.
- Effective procedures are in place to identify additional support needs of young people as they prepare for transition from P7. Young people identified at transition for additional support in literacy and numeracy are involved in individual target setting and planning. Their targets are regularly monitored and show improved outcomes. As young people progress through school, relevant information is shared with staff. A next important step is to streamline the information

enabling teachers to offer learning opportunities that better meet young people's needs. Staff should track and monitor the progress of young people who face challenges such as those with additional support needs and care experienced young people. This should ensure the needs of all learners are appropriately met.

- Teachers, young people and appropriate staff would benefit from being more involved in planning for young people with additional support needs. As a priority, learning targets should be more focused on measurable outcomes. Improved quality assurance procedures should include the monitoring and evaluating of these plans. Consideration should be given to the deployment of removing barriers to learning assistants in classes to maximise their impact when supporting learners. Young people with barriers to learning are not yet experiencing the appropriate support for them to overcome these barriers.
- Support staff work well with partners to provide appropriate flexible activities for young people with a range of needs. Health and wellbeing partners provide strong links with the school including NHS Education Partnership, Foundation Apprenticeships at 'The Bridge', Active Schools, Greystone Rovers Football Club and the recent addition of the Climate Challenge Fund. These groups provide effective support for vulnerable young people to develop their skills and abilities, and achieve success. It is important to keep all young people, for example those who are care-experienced and receiving personalised pathways, under regular review to ensure raised attainment and achievement for all.
- Across the school, professional learning for teachers in relation to meeting learners needs should be considered. Providing a range of differentiation methodologies should improve young people's progress and attainment.
- The S1-S5 personal and social education programme, delivered under the heading 'health and wellbeing' has been developed recently. The programme reflects current issues such as mental health, social media, relationships and sexual health. This is beginning to support young people's understanding of broader health issues. Registration teachers deliver the health and wellbeing programme supporting the development of the role of a significant adult. However, there is inconsistency in the quality of delivery and this is impacting on outcomes for learners.
- The school has recently been awarded the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Scotland Bronze Award. Aspects of equality and inclusion are delivered through the BGE curriculum including human rights, causes of inequality, stereotypes and hate crime. These are promoting a greater understanding of diversity and discrimination. Young people would benefit from further planned opportunities to learn about equality and diversity.
- Staff need to review the procedures about access to toilets to ensure young people's dignity and wellbeing is supported at all times.

### 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy – BGE

- The senior team have recently reviewed how the school collates and verifies data gathered for achievement of curriculum levels. Following this review staff across the school have increased the types of assessment evidence used to enable judgement of curriculum levels. This has led to new and more rigorous procedures which should support more valid and reliable data.
- In 2018 almost all young people achieved third curriculum level in literacy and most in numeracy. In the recent year, levels of attainment in the BGE dropped although the school now feel more confident in the accuracy of this data. In 2019 most achieved third curriculum level for literacy and numeracy. Staff believe that this change is due to the increased rigour in professional judgement, consequently making the data more reliable.
- The school provided information to show that in 2018 most young people achieved fourth level in literacy by the end of S3, and less than half in numeracy.
- Departments have different tracking and monitoring systems in place. These do not yet provide a clear pattern of attainment across the BGE. Senior staff have recently implemented a new tracking approach and they are confident this will provide clearer information about the progress of each learner. This should enable senior leaders to analyse patterns of attainment for cohorts, groups and individuals to ensure appropriate interventions and challenges are put in place to raise attainment.
- Departments have put in place strategies to support raised attainment but these are at an early stage. Staff should continue to monitor and review the use of strategies to increase attainment.

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy – Senior phase

- Almost all young people leave school with attainment in literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better, and they achieve this through a course award. There are positive five year trends in all literacy measures.
- In numeracy, young people are achieving SCQF level 4 or better through units and this was significantly higher than the VC in the recent year. Those achieving level five or better in numeracy did so through units and this was significantly higher than the VC in the latest year.
- Almost all S4 leavers do so with SCQF level 4 or better in literacy and in numeracy, achieving this through a course award. Less than half leave having achieved in literacy and in numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better. There has been an improvement in recent years in the percentage attaining in literacy at level 3 or better and level 4 or better. In numeracy almost all S4 leavers

achieve SCQF level 4 or better through unit awards and this is significantly higher than the VC in the latest year. More S5 young people over the last five years leave school with SCQF level 5 or better in literacy and numeracy.

### **Attainment over time – BGE**

- Senior leaders have not yet gathered and analysed data for attainment across curriculum areas at the BGE outwith literacy and numeracy. However, a system is in place this year which will allow them to do this and gather such data and analyse trends over time. All staff are reviewing their approaches to tracking and monitoring across the curriculum in order to build greater consistency in the data. Senior leaders need to make sure that staff underpin professional judgements with robust evidence based on the National Benchmarks.
- Middle and senior leaders need to adopt a systematic approach to the use of the data gathered, that supports early interventions for young people who are not progressing well in their learning. In particular, this should allow a focus on analysing outcomes for specific groups, including those facing barriers to learning.

### **Attainment over time – senior phase**

- Staff should continue to ensure greater rigour in recording and tracking the data for senior phase progress. The headteacher and his staff have a shared commitment to increase attainment across the school. In the senior phase, strategies are at an early stage and are not yet impacting on attainment. The strategies to increase attainment are based on knowing young people as individuals and are linked to the school value of being ambitious. Class teachers are enthusiastic about giving their time to support learners. They have established a timetable of supported study classes for all learners.
- Average complementary tariff scores of leavers have been significantly lower or much lower than the VC for four out of the latest five years. For young people in the lowest attaining 20% the school is in line with the VC. Average complementary tariff scores for the middle attaining 60% of young people were significantly lower or much lower than the VC in 2017 and 2018. The senior team are aware that the scores for the highest attaining 20% and the middle attaining 60% are an area for further improvement. Staff intend to address this by widening the range of learning pathways on offer.
- As young people move through the school from S4 to S6, based on the complementary tariff scores, there have been some improvements for specific groups of young people. At S4, for young people in the middle attaining 60% there has been an improvement in the latest year and tariff scores for all pupils have been in line with the VC for the last four years.
- By S5 there has been an improvement in the scores in the latest year for all pupils and the school is now in line with the VC. Using the measures by S6 based on the S6 roll, young people are achieving better for the middle and highest attaining 60% and 20% in the latest year from being significantly much lower to in line with the VC. In the latest year the tariff scores have improved to being in line with the VC. For the lowest 20% however, the scores are in line with the VC for the latest two years. Senior staff have begun to look closely at individual needs and will continue to review how they are adding value for young people who stay at school until S6.



## **Breadth and depth**

- Staff undertook a consultation to review the senior phase curriculum offer. Changes were made to the offer in S4 in 2016/17 where almost all learners moved from being presented for eight NQs to six NQs. The purpose of the change was to support greater depth in learning and to increase attainment. Overall this has not yet had the desired impact on increasing attainment in S4.
- The school now offer additional pathways in the senior phase which include courses leading to awards or courses beyond the NQs. These are due for presentation in 2020 and staff expect these to increase attainment.
- More reliable tracking should contribute to a smoother transition from the BGE to the senior phase supporting appropriate presentations and challenge. The strategic approach to tracking across the stages is an agreed area for school improvement and is included in the current school improvement plan.
- For those S4 who are presented for six NQs or more the attainment in mathematics and in science are affecting the total number of passes for young people. Senior staff should continue to support and challenge teachers to improve the attainment of all young people across the curriculum.
- Following the change to the new curriculum offer, there has been an improvement for those learners at S4 presented for one or more to four or more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or above. However for those young people presented for five or more to eight or more, the percentage of learners attaining at level 5C or better in the school is significantly lower than the VC in the latest two years. The percentage of A passes for one or more to six or more courses has declined.
- By S5, the percentage attaining two or more to five or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C or better is significantly lower than the VC. The percentage of SCQF level 6A or better passes in the latest year is in line with the VC for four or more to five or more courses. The percentage of learners attaining five or more qualifications at level 6A or better has now moved to being in line with the VC in the latest year. By S6 based on the S4 cohort, the percentage attaining one or more to five or more courses at level 6C or better is significantly lower the VC in the latest year.
- The foundations of learning are not yet rigorous enough in the BGE. This is having a direct impact on attainment in the senior phase. Senior staff are beginning to support teachers within the BGE as well as to review the school presentation policy to ensure all learners are appropriately placed in the senior phase.

## **Overall quality of learners achievements**

- The school is now taking a strategic view of achievements and a leadership role has been created to coordinate the school's approaches. This is beginning to raise the profile of achievements as an important part of the learner journey in Dumfries High School.
- The staff recognise that they are at the start of a process for improving the monitoring, tracking and evaluation of achievement and they intend to take further steps to strengthen the approach. Staff are not yet able to quantify levels of participation or to identify trends. The possibility of bringing partners involved in accreditation of achievement together on a regular basis to share information is being considered. This should support a greater understanding of the overall aims.

- The school has many strong examples of young people achieving skills through volunteering, becoming Sport Ambassadors, working with third sector organisations, taking part in YPI, developing leadership and business skills through Enterprise programmes and taking part in international activities (Kenya trip) through Camp International. Those taking part appreciate their experiences and are able to articulate the skills gained. They feel more confident as a result of their experiences.
- Through Dumfries and Galloway Youth Services a majority of young people in S1 have achieved a High 5 award. Work undertaken improved the experience of learners making the transition from P7 to S1. Youth services now intend to deliver Dynamic Youth Awards to all of S1 over the next year. A few young people are benefiting from participation in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Community learning and development (CLD) partners report an increased level of accreditation of achievement within Dumfries, including by young people from Dumfries High School. These opportunities are supporting skill development for a minority of young people. Staff should continue to build on these examples to include all learners.

### **Equity for all learners**

- All teachers receive information which outlines specific needs and challenges that may face individual young people. This is made available for teachers and senior staff now need to make sure the information is better used to support learners. There needs to be greater clarity about how teachers and support staff are expected to support learners who have additional support needs.
- The school has reduced the numbers of exclusions and are planning to focus on promoting positive behaviour as outlined in the school improvement plan. Young people should be more fully involved in discussions about how the school issues merit awards and the supporting positive behaviour strategies which are in place.

### **Attainment versus deprivation**

- Across the school there are 10.3% of learners from deciles 1-3. Staff are beginning to support these young people through for example mentoring approaches which target and track individual attainment. They should continue to review approaches to allocation of PEF funding in supporting specific groups of learners.

### **Destinations**

- There has been a significantly higher percentage of young people leaving school at S4 and S5 from Dumfries High School, compared to the VC in the last three years. Senior staff know their young people well and should continue to review the reasons behind the higher than average proportion of young people leaving school at these stages. There should also be a continued focus on the sustainability of the destinations, particularly for S4 leavers.
- The school has a large number of partners who support careers and destinations for learners. This is very positive and staff should now look more closely at the strategic plan for partnership to ensure there is a clear plan attached to outcomes for all learners.

## Choice of QI: Partnerships

- The development and promotion of partnerships
- Collaborative learning and improvement
- Impact on learners

- The school is now working alongside the other secondary schools and colleges in Dumfries within the council's Dumfries Learning Town initiative. Growing numbers of young people are accessing learning opportunities through the recently established 'The Bridge' facility. This is beginning to result in enhanced experiences and broader learning pathways.
- The school has developed positive relationships with CLD partners and has benefitted from a revised CLD approach following a period of service review. Dumfries and Galloway Council Youth Services has identified five clear strategic priorities which include providing a clearer CLD offer to schools and better opportunities for achievement and accreditation.
- During the Year of Young People (YOYP 2018) a large number of young people across Dumfries and Galloway took part in a young people's voices initiative to help inform service priorities. Dumfries High School was involved in this work which resulted in a few young people from the school taking part in the Youth Council. Mental health issues were identified as priorities to be addressed by young people. As a result a Youth Information service is now provided. This delivers one to one support and advice in weekly sessions in Dumfries High School. Staff should capitalise on some of this work by strengthening youth voice and leadership opportunities.
- At departmental level, there is a positive culture of looking outwards to seek external partners and extend learning experiences for young people. For example, in drama a well-established partnership with the local theatre enables young people studying drama to benefit from practical experience in a theatre environment. In science, work in partnership with a local laboratory and a distillery has provided practical experience. Science teachers have worked with the primary cluster schools to provide lessons and generate interest in the subject. A modern languages (ML) teacher delivers Spanish to some of the cluster primary schools as part of the authority's 1+2 ML approach. The business studies department has enabled young people to benefit from leadership and development opportunities through work with Young Enterprise. Active schools work has resulted in increased levels of participation in sport after school with around 20 young people working as coaches and a few as sports ambassadors. The school would benefit from collating an accurate overview of these activities to enable staff and partners to quantify overall levels of participation and begin to develop an overview of impact on learners.
- The DYW business partners are involved in regular meetings to provide opportunities for joint monitoring, evaluation and planning. The school has recognised in its own self-evaluation that overall, a more structured approach to involving partners in joint self-evaluation and planning for improvement is now needed to inform change.
- The school has agreed a School Partnership Agreement (SPA) with SDS containing key service milestones. Good progress is being made on the delivery of these agreed targets. Targeted and universal support is used well to ensure those young people at most risk of disengaging are supported to remain in school and progress onto a positive destination.
- Effective partnership arrangements exist with employers, local colleges and representatives from the Third-Sector. These have developed and improved over the last few years. These are

mainly targeted at ensuring young people benefit from a range of work placement experiences to support employability skills and inform career selection choices. Currently, approximately, 60 senior phase learners benefit from work placements which help develop employability skills. The school acknowledges that whilst this is a good platform they have ambitions to expand further work placement experiences. Partners contribute to the evaluation and planning for improvement of the work placement experiences that they provide for young people.

## 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.