Summarised inspection findings

Viewforth High School

Fife Council

28 February 2023

Key contextual information

School Name: Viewforth High School
Council: Fife Council
SEED number: 5407338
Roll (2022):   702

Viewforth High School is located in Kirkcaldy. The school shares the Windmill Community Campus with Rosslyn School, a public library, and council office. The headteacher took up post in February 2020 after a period of significant change in the senior leadership team. The headteacher is supported by three depute head teachers and a business support manager.

The headteacher created a pastoral support team of three principal teachers of guidance (PTG) shortly after taking up post. This was reviewed in 2022, with the team extended to include six PTG.

The school includes a Department of Additional Support, which supports sixteen young people with additional support needs.

Attendance is generally below the national average. Exclusions are generally above the national average. In February 2022 31.1% of pupils were registered for free school meals. In September 2021 49.9% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In September 2021 the school reported that 59.4% of pupils had additional support needs.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

■ learning and engagement
■ quality of teaching
■ effective use of assessment
■ planning, tracking and monitoring

■ In most lessons, there are positive relationships between staff and young people. The school vision of 'aspire together, achieve together', underpinned by the values of care, ambition, respect and equity, helps a supportive climate for learning. These, along with school routines such as the 'classroom welcome', supports most young people to have a positive attitude to learning. Young people talk enthusiastically about the importance of trying their best, not getting distracted, and listening to others. They understand that staff are helping them develop a 'growth mindset', as set out in the school's Learning Standard. Most young people recognise that setbacks and mistakes are a necessary part of learning.

■ The behaviour of a few young people, in class and across the school, results in disruption to learning activities at times. This behaviour may be a symptom of overly teacher-led lessons where young people are expected to listen passively to the teacher.

■ Senior leaders and staff recently reviewed the 'Learning Standard', the school's framework for learning, teaching and assessment. The framework is designed to support teachers' shared understand of the features of high-quality learning and teaching. It seeks to improve the consistency of learners' experiences across the school. Teachers have recently focused on the best ways to structure learning for young people. It is too early to assess the impact of the framework. However, the learning and teaching working group is well placed to use the 'Learning Standard' to develop features of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment further. Senior leaders should proceed with their well-devised plans to address the variability of teaching across the school.

■ Almost all teachers provide clear explanations and instructions which help most young people understand and engage well with their learning. They share the purpose of learning and what successful learning looks like with young people. However, too often learning activities are not clearly related to stated purposes or criteria for success in learning. Teachers should improve their use of success criteria, including opportunities for young people to co-create them. This should help young people feel motivated in their learning and increase their ability to evaluate their progress.

■ A majority of teachers rely too heavily on learning activities such as completing worksheets and copying text. These do not provide an appropriate level of challenge for all learners or support young people's engagement in learning well. Staff should further develop their approaches to provide activities that meet the needs of all learners. In doing so they should make more effective use of the recently introduced 'pupil matrix' and information about prior learning.

- Teachers should consider how to motivate young people further by offering more opportunities for young people to be actively involved in learning activities. These learning activities should be more relevant to real life contexts, and young people should have a greater say in what and how they learn. Teachers should help all young people to develop higher-order thinking skills more effectively and maintain high expectations for all young people.

- In a minority of lessons, teachers use collaborative approaches well, with young people working actively with their peers. Young people evaluate the work of other learners and provide thoughtful feedback. Young people engage well where teachers use a variety of teaching approaches. These include working collaboratively in paired or group work activities, using digital technology, and learning independently. A few teachers demonstrate skilled use of questioning to support young people to consider the context of learning more deeply. This good practice now needs to be shared and adopted more widely across the school.

- A majority of teachers make good use of a range of formative assessment strategies to check learners' understanding. They use resources such as show-me boards and digital apps effectively. Teachers should continue to reflect on their planning of assessment to ensure all young people can build on their learning effectively. A few teachers refine their teaching following the assessment of young people in the senior phase. This helps them to identify when they need to revisit aspects of learning, adopt retrieval practice or challenge young people's misconceptions. All teachers should now adopt this practice more consistently.

- Young people in the senior phase benefit from effective feedback and learner conversations with their teachers. Young people talk about their work and reflect on the evidence of their progress. Young people and staff also discuss and agree the young person's next steps to progress with their learning. Teachers should extend these approaches to young people in the broad general education (BGE).

- A few teachers work collaboratively with primary colleagues to develop a shared understanding and application of the achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. However, across the school, teachers' understanding of standards and expectations for the BGE are inconsistent. Teachers should develop their understanding of moderation. Moderation is stronger in the senior phase where a few staff are Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) appointees and support a shared understanding of national standards across the school. Staff confidence in applying national standards is improving due to the SQA Alternative Certification Model (ACM) and staff involvement in subject groups across Fife Council.

- Senior leaders have developed a monitoring and tracking toolkit, which is used across the school by all teachers to share information on pupil progress. This information allows comparisons to be made of how well learners are progressing and achieving across the curriculum, and over time. It is not yet clear how this information is informing planning for 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	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

- Teachers in English and mathematics identify the need to improve young people's literacy and numeracy skills and are using a range of strategies to do this. These includes enhanced support for young people in the BGE not working at anticipated CfE levels. These young people are identified from attainment data provided by primary schools. Further support includes a designated literacy and numeracy course for all young people in S1 and targeted work with young people at risk of leaving school without attaining appropriate literacy and numeracy awards. There are indications that these approaches, along with developing young people's learner pathways to achieving literacy and numeracy skills, are supporting improvements. This is particularly evident in young people's attainment over time at Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF) levels 3 and 4.

- Staff should increase their focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. This will ensure all young people have the skills they require to progress with their learning in all curricular areas.

Broad General Education

- A minority of young people achieved CfE third level or better, and a few achieved CfE fourth level, in literacy by the end of S3 in 2021 and 2022. In numeracy, by the end of S3, a majority of young people achieved CfE third level or better in 2022. This is an improvement from a minority achieving at this level in 2020 and 2021. However, a minority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy in 2022, which is a reduction from a majority gaining this level in 2020 and 2021.

- Senior and middle leaders identified the need to improve teacher judgements for literacy and numeracy. Teachers in English are using impactful professional learning offered by the local authority to develop their approaches to moderation and understanding of literacy national standards. Teachers in maths have begun to establish moderation activities with local primaries. They have developed the maths curriculum well to ensure it offers all young people progression as they move from primary to secondary. These approaches are leading to greater confidence in the data submitted in the most recent year.

Senior Phase
Leavers

- The school has maintained high levels of performance for leavers achieving SCQF level 3 and SCQF level 4 or better in literacy over the last five years. Most leavers achieved at SCQF level 4 or better in 2020 to 2022. This is in line with the virtual comparator (VC), apart from 2020 when it was significantly much lower than the VC. At SCQF level 5 or better and SCQF level 6, there is no consistent pattern of improvement over the last five years. At SCQF level 6, the

school performance was much lower than the VC in 2020 but improved to be in line with the VC in 2021.

■ The school has also maintained high levels of performance for leavers achieving SQCF level 3 and SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy over the last five years. Almost all leavers achieved SCQF level 4 or better in three of the last five years which was significantly much better than the VC. A majority of leavers over the last five years, with the exception of 2020, achieved SCQF level 5 or better which is in line with the VC. A few leavers achieved SCQF level 6.

Senior Phase
Cohorts

Literacy
■ At S4, most young people attained SCQF level 4 or better in literacy over the last five years. This is in line with the VC. A majority of young people attained SCQF level 5 or better over the last five years. This was significantly lower than the VC in the latest year. By S5, based on the S5 roll, most young people attained SCQF level 4 or better over the last five years, apart from in 2018 and 2021, when almost all young people attained SCQF level 4 or better. This is in line with the VC. At SCQF level 5 or better and SCQF level 6, performance was not strong over the five-year period with the school performing significantly lower or much lower than the VC for selected years. By S6, based on the S6 roll, all or almost all young people attained SCQF level 5 or better in four of the last five years. This is in line with the VC. At SCQF level 6, a majority of young people attained SCQF level 6 or better from 2020 to 2022. This was significantly much lower than the VC in 2020 and significantly lower than the VC in 2022.

Numeracy
■ At S4, the school has maintained high levels of performance at SCQF level 4 or better over from 2019 to 2022. In the last three years, attainment was significantly much higher than the VC. The school has demonstrated improvements at SCQF level 5 or better with the majority of young people attaining at this level in 2021 and 2022. This was significantly higher than the VC. By S5, based on the S5 roll, a majority of young people attained SCQF level 5 or better from 2019 to 2022. This is in line with the VC. The school has improved the number of young people attaining at SCQF level 6 over the five-year period, moving from significantly much lower or lower than the VC in selected years to being in line with the VC in 2022. By S6, based on the S6 roll, performance at SCQF level 5 is strong, generally above the VC, and has been maintained over the five-year period. Senior leaders recognise the need to improve performance at SCQF level 6. In 2022, only a few learners attained at this level which was significantly much lower than the VC.

Attainment over time
BGE and Senior Phase
■ Senior leaders have established an effective system for tracking and monitoring the attainment of young people. Senior and middle leaders have focused rightly on ensuring the quality and accuracy of information entered into the system. They recognise teachers should continue to improve assessment and moderation to ensure the data entered for young people in the BGE is robust. Middle leaders should develop how they use data gathered to measure the impact of interventions to support young people. Senior leaders should define clearly the responsibilities of all staff to make effective use of the data. Senior leaders are able to demonstrate attainment over time across all curricular areas but acknowledge that judgements in relation to CfE levels need to be more reliable.

Senior Phase

■ Attainment in the senior phase has been impacted by different factors. These include the COVID-19 pandemic, young people's attendance, learners leaving school during S4 and S5, and the breadth and depth of the curriculum offer. Staff undertook a review of the senior phase curriculum in 2021. This resulted in a few departments offering additional courses to young people. Senior leaders plan to further review the curriculum to offer a broader range of appropriate learning pathways to young people.

■ When compared using complementary tariff points, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% and middle 60% of leavers decreased from 2018 to 2020. However, the attainment of these young people increased from significantly much lower than the VC in 2020 to in line with the VC in 2021. There is no identifiable pattern of improvement in the attainment of the highest attaining 20% of leavers but it has remained in line with the VC for the last 5 years.

■ In S4, the performance of the lowest 20% and middle 60% is generally in line with the VC over the last five years. For the highest 20%, the school has generally performed significantly much better or better than the VC over the five-year period. By S5 based on the S5 roll, performance of the lowest 20% and highest 20% is generally in line with the VC. Senior leaders recognise the need to improve the performance of the middle 60% who often perform significantly much lower than the VC. By S6, based on the S6 roll, the performance of all groups is generally in line with the VC.

Breadth and Depth

■ Staff are increasing the range of SCQF courses offered to learners. Staff should continue to review these arrangements to ensure all young people can access learning pathways offering appropriate breadth and depth of learning to meet their needs and aspirations.

■ At S4, the school has improved its performance for young people attaining two or more to seven or more courses at SCQF level 3 or better and SCQF level 4 or better over the five-year period. However, the school's performance at six or more to seven or more courses in SCQF level 4 or better has been significantly lower than the VC in four of the last five years. A majority of young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. This is in line with the VC, apart from 2019 and 2022, when it was significantly lower. A minority of young people achieve three or more to five or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. Staff should continue to support young people to attain more high-quality passes at SCQF level 5.

■ By S5, most young people achieved four or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better in four of the past five years. This is in line with the VC. Most young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better from 2019 to 2022. This is in line with the VC, apart from 2022 when it was significantly much lower than the VC. A majority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better in four of the past five years. This is in line with the VC, apart from 2018 and 2022 when it was significantly lower. A minority of young people attained two or more or three or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C over the past five years. There is no identifiable pattern of improvement in these measures. Staff should continue to support young people in S5 to attain high-quality passes at SCQF level 5 and 6.

■ By S6, most young people achieved four or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better in the past five years. This is in line with the VC, apart from 2021 when it was significantly much higher than the VC. Most young people achieved one or more qualifications at SCQF 5A or better over the five-year period, apart from 2019 and 2021, when almost all young people achieved this. Most young people achieved one or more qualifications, and a majority achieved three or more qualifications, at SCQF level 6C or better from 2019 to 2022. This is in line with

the VC. There is no pattern of improvement in young people attaining at SCQF level 7C or above and 7A over the past five years. Staff should continue to support young people in S6 to attain high-quality passes at SCQF level 6 and 7.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

■ Young people enjoy participating in a broad range of opportunities for achievement. This includes sports, the arts, and other clubs linked to subject learning. These opportunities help young people improve their confidence, communication skills and health and wellbeing. Staff celebrate young people's achievements through assemblies, celebration ceremonies, newsletters and letters of praise. This creates a positive culture that promotes individual and school success.

■ Young people are learning about the wider community through their involvement in charity work and volunteering. For example, young people develop their citizenship skills by supporting the Kirkcaldy foodbank. A minority of young people volunteer in the community through partnership work with Kirkcaldy YMCA. This adds value to these young people's achievements, with a few learners gaining accredition for volunteering. Young people also develop leadership and team work skills by leading sports activities. A minority of young people in S2 and a few young people in the senior phase gain sports leaders awards.

■ Young people in S3 and S4 can participate in a cadets programme, as part of the curriculum, which includes the Duke of Edinburgh award. This helps young people to develop a broad range of valuable lifeskills, such as resilience. The increase in accredited achievement courses allows young people to gain new skills and it is adding value to their overall achievements. A majority of young people in the senior phase completed an emergency first aid at work course and an SQA leadership award. These also help young people to develop their confidence and leadership skills. Senior leaders should continue to extend these opportunities and pathways.

■ Senior leaders recognise the need to develop approaches used to track young people's participation in achievement opportunities. This will support staff more effectively to identify and address the barriers to young people participating and developing skills. Young people are not always aware of the skills they are developing through their participation in achievement activities. Staff should continue as planned to develop a skills framework, aligning it to skills for learning, life and work. This will help staff to support young people to identify their skills and develop them more progressively.

Equity for all learners

■ Half of young people attending the school live in SIMD data zones 1 and 2. The average complementary tariff scores of school leavers living in the most deprived areas were significantly much lower than the national average in 2020 and but moved in line with the national average in 2021. This is in line with the VC. For school leavers in 2021, living in data zones 3 and 5, attainment was significantly lower than the national average. This is in line with the VC. Senior leaders identify the need to increase the attainment of all young people, with a continued focus on overcoming the barriers experienced by those living in deprivation.

■ Senior leaders and staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural, and economic context of the school community. They use their knowledge of the context and information about barriers to learning to understand young people's needs. Senior leaders have used the school's Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) allocation to appoint staff to support targeted young people and families. These include a principal teacher of raising attainment, a family support worker and support staff. Senior leaders should ensure the impact of PEF funding on

attendance, engagement and attainment is monitored and measured fully to demonstrate a reduction in the poverty-related attainment gap.

- A range of partners work effectively with young people to improve outcomes for those facing barriers to success. This is helping young people to improve their attendance and attainment as they prepare to transition from school. Senior leaders recognise that improving young people's attendance is a key strategy to raising attainment. Whilst strategies used to improve attendance so far demonstrate a positive impact for individuals, they are not yet leading to sustained improvements in the school's attendance profile.

- Staff are very mindful of costs associated with the school day and are committed to ensuring equity for young people.

Post-school destinations
- From 2018 to 2021, most young people moved to an initial positive destination on leaving school. This is below the VC. Staff seek to improve this by tracking young people identified as being at risk. Staff address barriers which could prevent leavers achieving and sustaining a positive destination. They are working effectively with partners. Senior leaders evidence recent improvements suggesting almost all leavers achieved a positive destination in 2022.

Context

The Department of Additional Support (DAS) is a local authority specialist provision. It opened in 2019 with three pupils who are now in fourth year. The local authority's area management group places young people from local primary schools into the DAS. The young people have a wide range of additional support needs arising from a variety of barriers to learning. There are currently 16 young people from first to fourth year in the DAS. A majority of young people attend mainstream classes for varying amounts of the week. A principal teacher leads the work of the DAS. There are two teachers and two pupil support assistants. A group of mainstream teachers also delivers specialist subjects for the young people.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

■ All staff in the DAS focus on providing the best possible learning environment and experiences for young people. Staff know young people and their family circumstances very well and demonstrate great care and respect for young people. Staff use useful information from the pupil passports to help them meet learners' needs. All staff in the DAS are highly skilled at intervening and providing support to individuals as required. As a result, young people are happy and eager to be in school, and almost all engage very well in their learning.

■ Teachers plan learning experiences that are matched well to almost all young people's additional support needs and interests. They consistently share the purpose of learning and how young people can be successful. Teachers should continue to develop young people's understanding of what they are learning and how to be successful. Staff's explanations and instructions are clear, and they make good use of visual signs and prompts to keep young people on task. They use questioning well to promote young people's understanding and encourage curiosity. Teachers provide regular opportunities for young people to exercise choice in activities. Young people know that staff listen to them and value their views. Teachers should continue to develop the use of digital technology to enhance learners' experiences.

■ Teachers use a range of assessment approaches to allow young people to demonstrate their learning. A recently introduced digital platform allows staff to share young people's learning with parents which is being received well. Young people enjoy choosing what to share with their parents. Young people have personalised termly targets for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. An important next step would be to support young people to understand their targets better. Teachers should continue to develop opportunities for young people to apply their learning in new and unfamiliar contexts. They should develop approaches to moderation, including work with other schools, to support their professional judgements about attainment.

■ Teachers in the DAS plan together over different timescales and across a range of curriculum areas. This includes well-considered topics covering a range of experiences and outcomes and linked to young people's interests. They should continue to ensure all young people experience their full entitlements to the BGE in all curricular areas. The principal teacher recognises correctly that the department needs to develop its own tracking system to monitor the progress of young people better. There is scope to make more effective use of the young people's targets, both in planning learning and in monitoring progress.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

■ Almost all young people are working within CfE early and first levels and are making good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. Teachers should continue to develop approaches to evidence young people's progress in all curricular areas over time in the BGE.

■ In the senior phase, young people are working towards National Qualifications and awards in a range of subjects, appropriate to their needs and interests. Links with the local college are supporting a few young people to prepare for post-school transitions. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop pathways for all young people to ensure that their attainment and achievement is progressive. This includes strengthening links with businesses and other organisations to support young people to develop skills for learning, life and work.

■ Young people are developing useful skills by taking part in practical activities such as cooking, science, music and drama. They develop enterprise and citizenship skills through a range of well-planned activities and experiences. An example is where young people take part in the gardening project with the home economics department and prepare for the school's Christmas fayre. A few young people develop leadership skills by working with Active Schools and lead football sessions for their peers. Supported by senior leaders, teachers should continue to develop accreditation for young people's achievements in a progressive and coherent way.

■ All staff in the DAS are proactive in addressing the cost of the school day. Young people benefit from a breakfast club, which provides a soft start for those who require it, and staff provide uniform and kit sensitively for those who need it. Further approaches to developing effective tracking will support the principal teacher in evidencing the impact of planned interventions in closing poverty-related attainment gaps.

Other relevant evidence

■ Senior leaders should review the use and effectiveness of the daily registration time.

■ The school provides two periods of quality physical education for all young people from S1-6, with an additional period in S2.

■ The school librarian works well with principal teachers of curriculum to support the planning of learning activities for groups of learners, for example through the creation of 'project boxes' in art. The library is used to support the learning of young people in both the DAS and the wider school, for example through the coding club, where young people learn about creating animations, and through a paired reading initiative. The librarian supports young people who are timetabled in the library to study for National Qualifications. The librarian is involved in planning the development of a bibliotherapy group which will support young people with their literacy, their health and mental wellbeing, and which will also cover topics such as anti-racism.

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.