

Summarised inspection findings

Prestwick Academy

South Ayrshire Council

23 June 2020

School name: Prestwick Academy
Council: South Ayrshire Council
SEED number: 8236836
Roll (Sep 2018): 1,184

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

Exclusions were generally below the national average in 16/17 (18.5 per 1000 pupils). Data provided by the school shows the exclusion figure for 18/19 increased to 38.8 per 1000 pupils.

In February 2019, 8.8% of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2018, 4.9% of pupils lived in the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.

In September 2018, the school reported that 23% of pupils had additional support needs.

Key contextual information

Prestwick Academy is a non-denominational secondary school in the town of Prestwick. There are five associated primary schools. The senior leadership team consists of the acting headteacher, four permanent depute headteachers and one acting depute headteacher. The acting headteacher has been in post for approximately 17 months.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

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

- Positive relationships throughout the school community reflect the values of honesty, equality, ambition, respect, responsibility and trust. Almost all young people and staff work well together. Most young people say their teachers treat them fairly and with respect. Almost all feel the school is helping them to understand and respect other people.
- Most young people are attentive and engage well with tasks. In the best examples, they show enthusiasm and commitment to their learning. Most young people participate well in class discussions and in group and individual tasks. In almost all lessons, staff highlight the purpose of learning and refer to skills for learning, life and work. This includes a focus on raising awareness of employability skills and career pathways. Young people would benefit from further discussion about the purpose of learning and opportunities to work with staff to identify what success looks like. Most young people have regular opportunities to reflect on their progress. They are clear about what they need to do to succeed.
- In the majority of lessons, young people's needs are met well with appropriate tasks. Almost all young people participate well in their lessons when activities are appropriately challenging. A majority of learners benefit from learning which is set in real-life contexts related to their needs and interests. There are a few strong examples of young people leading learning through collaborative group work with their peers. A few young people become distracted and engage in low-level disruption when their learning needs are not met. Senior leaders and staff should

ensure expectations of young people's commitment to learning and behaviour in all areas of the school are consistently high and in line with the school's vision and values. School leaders have identified the need to develop further teachers' approaches to active, pupil-led learning and meeting needs. This should include improvements to pace and challenge in a few lessons.

- There are more than a few examples of staff using digital technology well to enhance young people's learning, including for learners who require additional support. Most staff use interactive whiteboards and a range of digital resource applications effectively. A few teachers use digital approaches innovatively to enrich young people's learning experiences and to promote engagement. Most staff use digital media platforms effectively. Staff use these to share the content of lessons and homework, as well as give feedback. Young people access resources independently and are positive about how these digital media platforms support their learning. Staff should develop the consistent use of these digital technology approaches across the school.
- Young people have a strong voice in improving the school. Teachers seek their views about learning and share how their feedback is used to improve learning and teaching. Departments use feedback from young people and show how changes are implemented, for example with 'You Said, We Did' boards. Young people welcome the wide range of well-planned opportunities they have to contribute effectively to the life of the school and local community. As a result, young people are developing important capacities such as confidence and responsible citizenship.
- Most teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. They use questioning largely in order to test young people's knowledge and understanding. In a few classes, teachers encourage learners to deepen their thinking through skilful use of more probing questioning. There is scope to share this good practice more widely across the school to promote higher-order thinking skills.
- Senior leaders should continue to develop consistent approaches to high-quality learning and teaching across the school. All staff have participated in, and a few have led, professional learning to support this aim. This includes planning learning to meet the needs of all, and using approaches to enable young people to learn more actively and independently. Senior leaders, staff and young people should collaborate to refresh the school's learning and teaching policy. This should include making clear the expectations of high-quality learning and teaching in the school. This should support further staff across departments achieving a consistent understanding of what makes high-quality learning and teaching.
- Staff use a range of effective assessments to determine the progress of all learners. Young people have regular opportunities to take part in self and peer assessment that enable them to reflect on their progress. In the broad general education (BGE), these assessments are clearly linked to success criteria and the National Benchmarks for each Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. Almost all young people benefit from learning conversations with teachers, where they receive helpful feedback on what is working well and what they need to do to improve. Departments have developed feedback sheets which are issued on completion of assessments. These provide learners with high-quality feedback. All staff employ colour coding for grading to inform learners of their progress through a level in the BGE and working grades for the senior phase. This common approach is leading to almost all young people confidently discussing their current levels of attainment. Staff across the school should continue to build on this positive practice to ensure young people make the best possible progress.
- In the BGE, staff successfully plan learning using experiences and outcomes. Teachers confidently use the National Benchmarks to support assessment criteria. A staff member has

been appointed as a Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer (QAMSO) and is supporting staff to apply national standards in literacy. Senior and middle leaders are embedding moderation well as an ongoing process to support planning. Professional learning, delivered by the local authority, has allowed staff to work with colleagues from other secondary schools to collaborate and agree standards. Teachers undertake moderation activities throughout the session and this is leading to improved consistency and confidence in assessing young people's progress in learning. A useful next step should be to build on current work with associated primary schools. In the senior phase, staff have a strong appreciation of assessment standards. Teachers undertake Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) duties and share this experience with colleagues.

- Departments track and monitor young people's progress very well using a range of different approaches. This is enabling middle leaders to have an effective overview of attainment. Middle leaders and teachers use this data to plan strategies to support young people who are not reaching their targets. Middle leaders place a clear focus on monitoring and supporting young people with barriers to learning.
- A strength of the school is coherence across planning, tracking and monitoring, which ensures young people make appropriate progress in their learning. This is leading to the school community having shared expectations for the standards to be achieved and an increasing confidence in the reliability of the data collected. The systems being embedded are meaningful for learners and manageable for staff.

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

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

- In 2016, 2017 and 2019, by the end of S3, most young people attained third Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level or better in all literacy measures (reading, writing, listening and talking). In 2018, almost all young people attained third CfE level or better in all literacy measures. Young people attaining fourth CfE level in all literacy measures declined from the majority in 2017 and 2018 to less than half in 2019.
- In 2016, 2018 and 2019, by the end of S3, almost all young people attained third CfE level or better in numeracy. In 2017, all young people attained third CfE level or better in numeracy. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the majority of young people attained fourth CfE level in numeracy.
- Prior to transition to Prestwick Academy, teachers of English work with primary pupils to support them to develop and apply higher-order reading skills. This initiative is having a positive impact on young people, including those in targeted groups, and has the potential to raise literacy levels more widely. The school is deploying a range of strategies to support literacy improvements. These include a regular reading programme, the First Minister's reading challenge, one-to-one discussion with targeted young people to support book choice and a recently introduced creative writing club.
- Staff have access to a range of data to support their professional judgements, including the Scottish National Standardised Assessments. The school is using moderation activities to continue to develop a shared understanding of standards. Teachers participate in these activities in school, with associated primaries and more widely in the local authority. Teachers should continue to engage with moderation activities, in particular to develop further their understanding of achievement of fourth CfE level.

Senior phase

Leavers

- Almost all young people leaving school from 13/14 to 17/18 attained literacy at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better. Over that period, the percentage of leavers achieving literacy at SCQF level 5 or better improved. In 16/17 and 17/18, almost all young people achieved literacy at SCQF level 5, and in the latest year this was significantly higher than the virtual comparator (VC). Between 15/16 and 17/18, the majority of young people achieved literacy at SCQF level 6, in line with the VC. Between 14/15 and 17/18, there has been an improving trend of young people achieving literacy at SCQF level 6 before leaving school.

- Almost all young people leaving school from 13/14 to 17/18 attained numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better. Overall, there was an improving percentage of young people achieving numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better. In 17/18, most young people achieved at this level and this was significantly higher than the VC. Less than half of young people leaving school between 13/14 and 17/18 achieved numeracy at SCQF level 6. For three of the five years between 13/14 and 17/18, this was significantly higher than the VC.
- As part of the school's approaches to improving attainment at SCQF levels 4 and 5 in literacy and numeracy, teachers have developed a range of assessments for targeted groups of learners. These provide meaningful and real-life contexts to assess young people's progress and are supporting them to achieve.
- In 17/18, the number of S4 leavers was the lowest in the four-year period from 14/15 to 17/18. Amongst those, a few young people left school with no literacy or numeracy qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better. Senior leaders are using a range of targeted strategies to address barriers to young people's learning. These include a Pupil Equity Funded (PEF) educational support officer to raise attendance and attainment. Senior leaders have positive early evidence of the impact of this new initiative.

Attainment over time

BGE

- Teachers report to parents, three times across an academic session, on young people's achievement of CfE levels in all curriculum areas. In order to improve information sharing and data gathering, the school is agreeing common literacy and numeracy assessments with the five associated primaries. This should support continuity in learning for young people as they progress to secondary school.
- Across the school, departments have effective tracking systems for monitoring the progress of young people. This session, senior leaders have introduced a digital tool for tracking and monitoring young people's progress in all curriculum areas across the BGE. It has been designed to take account of various characteristics and factors that may impact on progress in learning. This should support the best use of data to inform strategic decisions such as the planning of learning pathways.

Senior phase

- From 14/15 to 17/18, the average complementary tariff scores of the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% of leavers steadily improved. Following a large fall in the average complementary tariff scores from 13/14 to 14/15 for the lowest attaining 20% of leavers, these scores improved to significantly higher than the VC in 17/18. The middle attaining 60% of young people performed in line with the VC. The performance of the highest attaining 20% of leavers fluctuated between 13/14 and 17/18 and in the latest year was significantly lower than the VC. Senior leaders are continuing to widen curriculum choice for young people with the aim of improving attainment further. For example, courses in childcare and early development, health sector, and sport and recreation have been introduced.
- In S4, average complementary tariff scores for the lowest attaining 20% were in line with the VC between 14/15 and 18/19, with the exception of 16/17 and 17/18, when these scores were significantly higher than the VC. From 14/15 to 16/17, the middle attaining 60% of young people performed in line with the VC. This performance improved to, respectively, significantly much higher and significantly higher than the VC in 17/18 and 18/19. The highest attaining 20% of young people performed in line with the VC.

- By S5, from 14/15 to 18/19, average complementary tariff scores for the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% were in line with the VC, with the exception of 18/19, when these scores were significantly higher than the VC. The performance of the highest attaining 20% was in line with the VC.
- By S6, from 14/15 to 17/18, average complementary tariff scores were in line with the VC. In 18/19, the average complementary tariff scores of the highest attaining 20% of young people fell to significantly lower than VC.
- Senior leaders are aspirational for all young people and raising attainment is a clear focus at the regular extended leadership team meetings which include principal teachers. Senior leaders are supporting staff to continue to improve their skills in using attainment and progress data. This is leading to a better understanding of the improvements required to raise the attainment and achievement of young people. House teams, departments and the principal teacher of raising attainment use a range of strategies to improve outcomes for young people. These include 'focus cards', supported study, grade recovery and mentoring. More effective tracking and monitoring is supporting high-quality professional dialogue around how young people's progress can be improved. This includes learning conversations with young people to discuss working grades and target grades that are reviewed regularly.

Breadth and depth

- In S4, in 18/19, the percentage of young people attaining National Qualifications at SCQF level 4 or better was in line with the VC for one or more to six or more courses. Most young people attained six or more courses at SCQF level 4 or better. Senior leaders are targeting those young people at risk of missing out on qualifications at S4. Overall, in 17/18 and 18/19, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to five or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better improved to significantly higher than the VC. In the same period, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to three or more courses at SCQF level 5A or better was significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC. The percentage of young people attaining four or more to six or more courses at SCQF level 5A or better was in line with the VC.
- By S5, between 16/17 and 18/19, the percentage of young people attaining National Qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better and 5A or better increased for one or more to six or more courses. Overall, in 18/19, this was either significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC. In 18/19, the percentage of young people attaining one or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better was the highest in five years and significantly much higher than the VC. The percentages of young people attaining two or more to five or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better were in line with the VC. Over the five-year period to 18/19, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 6A or better has fallen. There is clear headroom for improvement and senior leaders have identified that securing a greater number of passes at 'A' is the next step.
- By S6, over the five-year period to 18/19, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to three or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better improved. Overall, in the same period, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 6C or better and SCQF level 6A or better was in line with the VC. The percentage of young people attaining one or more to three or more courses at SCQF level 7C decreased to significantly lower or much lower than the VC in 18/19. Senior leaders recognise this is an area needing further development.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Senior, middle leaders and teachers have made a positive start to tracking young people's engagement and success in wider achievement activities within and outwith school. Young

people are encouraged to engage in a wide range of achievement activities. A few young people can discuss some of the skills they are gaining from their participation. Senior leaders recognise that as a next step, the school should work to identify and target opportunities for young people who do not currently participate in wider achievement activities. Moving forward, staff should support young people to understand better their skill development through their wider achievement activities.

- The wide variety of out-of-class activities include an impressive range of leadership, sporting, practical and musical contexts. Currently, the majority of young people are involved, though participation varies within and across year groups. There are almost 75 out-of-class activities available for learners to participate in, with the school tracking participation in over 60 additional out-of-school activities.
- Recognition and celebration of achievement is very strong. The school celebrates well the successes of learners through a variety of means. These include prize-giving ceremonies, roll of honour acknowledgement, assemblies and termly newsletters. Young people value highly the awarding of school colours.
- Where appropriate, accreditation is being used to recognise and celebrate achievements. For example, young people gain awards as Active Schools Dance Leaders and Sports Ambassadors. They also participate in the Diana Award as anti-bullying ambassadors and Saltire Award for volunteering. A few young people participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Young people are gaining employability skills through industry-recognised qualifications through, for example, Prince's Trust projects. Young people involved have also improved their levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy, with many achieving at SCQF level 5 in both. This is improving their life chances and opening up new routes for their futures. The school should continue with its plans to extend the range of accreditation further.
- The school has well-developed links with local business partners and organisations. The design and technology department has worked with local, national and international businesses to extend young people's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) experiences and opportunities. Staff have developed innovative, highly effective partnerships with Ayrshire College and local aerospace employers to promote careers in engineering. Young people study aspects of these career pathways in school, and in the local college, supported enthusiastically by employers. Further examples of effective partnership working include links with schools in France, to support young people's experiences in modern languages.
- Through the encouragement of teachers and departments within the school, young people are benefiting from new experiences including cultural trips within the UK and abroad. These are contributing to improved confidence, providing wider experience of working within teams and improving communication skills.
- Young people are developing their leadership skills through their roles as mental health ambassadors and My World of Work ambassadors. Other leadership opportunities include the LGBT+ group, library committee and pupil leadership team.
- The modern studies and English departments have supported young people to take part in a prestigious national mock trial competition. Prestwick Academy is the only school in Scotland to have won this competition twice. Through their involvement in the process, young people have made connections with senior university staff and practising legal professionals. They have developed their research and improved their debating skills.

Equity for all learners

- The school has a strong commitment to ensuring equity for all learners. Teachers use data to help them plan well-judged and targeted strategies for young people. Effective support is developing for young people and their families to overcome the impact of economic hardship. The school reduces the 'cost of the school day' for young people through, for example, providing support for school trips, uniform and home-learning resources.
- The creation of an education support officer post using PEF has resulted in effective support for young people with low attendance and their families, particularly those in S1 and S4. There is clear, early impact for a few targeted young people in terms of their levels of confidence, attendance, engagement and attainment. A few young people articulate the transformational change for them and the positive impact the strategies have had on their life chances.
- There have been improvements in the attainment of young people requiring additional support. By the time of leaving school, the percentage attaining literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better and level 6 improved between 13/14 and 17/18.
- The school has rightly identified the need to look outwards to other schools in South Ayrshire Council and the Regional Improvement Collaborative for good practice to increase attendance, and to engage with stakeholders and partners to keep reducing exclusions. This should have a positive effect on reducing the small number of young people who are missing out on success.

Positive destinations

- Almost all young people who left school between 13/14 and 17/18 have moved on to an initial positive destination. This is in line with the VC. The majority move to higher or further education on leaving school.

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.