

# Summarised inspection findings

**Boroughmuir High School**

The City of Edinburgh Council

3 March 2020

School name: Boroughmuir High School  
Council: The City of Edinburgh Council  
SEED number: 5531438  
Roll (Sep 2018): 1255

Attendance is generally above the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In February 2019 fewer than 5% of pupils were registered for free school meals. This is compared to a national average of 15%.

In September 2018 fewer than 5% of pupils lived in one of the designated 20% most socio-economically deprived areas in Scotland.

In September 2018 the school reported that 27% of pupils had additional support needs. This is compared to a national average of 32%.

## Key contextual information

Boroughmuir High School is a non-denominational school situated in the Fountainbridge area of south central Edinburgh. A new school building opened in February 2018.

### 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

- The school has a respectful ethos. Young people benefit from positive relationships they have with their teachers, peers and staff from school partners. Almost all classes have a purposeful climate for learning. Young people are enthusiastic about learning, highly motivated, ambitious and keen to do well. Most young people are articulate and confident. They aspire to succeed, especially in relation to qualifications and future career pathways.
- Young people make positive contributions to the life of the school and the wider community. Their participation in wider aspects of the life of the school is enriching their learning experiences. Opportunities include work on the Youth Philanthropy Initiative and assuming responsibilities through leadership roles. A buddying scheme and a programme of peer-supported learning enhances the learning experiences for many young people.
- Young people experience good quality learning through well-organised tasks and activities in a majority of classes. However, teachers generally spend too long talking resulting in young people being insufficiently involved in their own learning. In most classes, teachers deliver learning at the whole class, diminishing how well individual learners' needs are met. In a minority of classes, teachers skilfully check the understanding of all young people throughout the lesson and provide an appropriate level of support. This should become a consistent feature of learning across the school. The school has identified, as a priority in the current

school improvement plan, the need to support teachers in meeting the needs of every learner more effectively. This work is still ongoing and it has yet to achieve the intended impact, particularly for some young people who require additional support with their learning.

- Staff are enthusiastically using a variety of approaches to develop digital learning across the school. These approaches are supporting learning and teaching in a range of different ways, and are helping to embed digital learning across the school.
- Over the last year, teachers and young people have been involved in some important work to evaluate and reflect on pupils' views of learning and teaching. They gathered the views through carrying out learning walks and focus groups and issuing questionnaires. Some areas for development have been identified from this initiative. As this work moves forward it will be important to involve as many young people as possible, and ensure a coherent approach to making the agreed key changes. The changes should also be evaluated systematically to ensure they are having the desired positive outcome.
- Over a number of years, teachers have been developing their approaches to learning and teaching, building on the strengths of their collegiate approach. Staff are carrying out a wide range of projects to support better learning, and have created an overview of what constitutes high-quality learning in the school. This has brought a shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning but has not yet resulted in consistently high-quality lessons.
- Most teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. In a majority of lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning with young people and what they need to do to be successful. In a few lessons, the process of sharing the intended outcomes is of a high quality. Young people would benefit from this good practice being shared more effectively across the school.
- In a few classes, teachers use open-ended questioning to challenge thinking and deepen learning. Young people are more engaged in these lessons, and develop a healthy curiosity towards their learning. Young people demonstrate clear potential to lead their own learning, practice which should become more consistent across the school. The majority of young people feel the school listens to their views. Young people would welcome increased opportunities to have an influence on what, and how, they learn.
- Young people are positive about the extra support, such as online resources and supported study which teachers provide to help them with their studies. Teachers offer a programme of supported study for young people in preparation for National Qualifications. This is supporting positive outcomes for young people.
- All departments have undertaken an audit of assessment and moderation practice at the broad general education (BGE). As a result, staff have identified a number of common themes for improvement. These include developing young people's awareness of their strengths and needs as learners. Teachers should better engage young people in high-quality conversations about their learning, and set meaningful individualised targets. This should help teachers and young people to assess progress more effectively.
- Staff are inconsistent in how well they include assessment as integral to planning for learning and teaching. The school should focus on sharing good practice in this area to support greater consistency. Planning should include consideration of how best to meet the needs of individuals and groups of young people. Teachers are inconsistent in how they use assessment to support learning. As a result, learners are not always receiving the support and challenge they need to help them make appropriate progress.

- Staff's understanding of standards and expectations of young people's attainment at the BGE, requires further development. Teachers are using National Benchmarks with S1 and S2, however, all staff need to make more effective use of moderation of standards from S1 to S3. Staff should continue with their professional learning around moderation and understanding of standards, including using the local authority's resources. A number of subjects start programmes for National Qualifications at S3. As a result, at this stage, most teachers are not planning using the experiences and outcomes provided in national advice. Few staff are using National Benchmarks to help monitor young people's progress in S3, or to support their assessment of when a learner has achieved a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level.
- For young people from S3 to S6, teachers have a clear understanding of assessment standards in National Qualifications. Many teachers are involved with Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) duties and participate in their learning events. They are very knowledgeable of what young people are required to do to succeed in National Qualifications. They make confident use of SQA criteria to assess learning.
- Senior leaders have recently adopted a new approach to record CfE levels and progress from S1 to S3. This system is being used to monitor and track young people's progress. The approach is promoting a consistent use of shared criteria and language across the school. The school needs to continue to develop the quality of evidence that underpins teachers' judgements, to ensure they are more robust and rigorous. Staff should continue to improve reports to parents, so that they are better informed of young people's strengths and next steps.
- The school's approaches to monitor young people's progress at the senior phase are effective, enabling senior leaders and teachers to take appropriate action. Young people would benefit from all teachers becoming more consistent in how they identify the levels at which young people are working, and those grades for which they should be aiming.

## 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

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

### 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very good

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

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

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

##### BGE

- The school reported that in S3, almost all young people achieved third CfE level in literacy and numeracy from 2015/16 to 2018/19. Almost all young people achieved fourth level in literacy and most achieved this level in numeracy in 2018/19. The percentages achieving literacy improved between 2015/16 and 2018/19. The majority of young people attained fourth level literacy in 2015/16 and most in 2016/17 and 2017/18. The school reported that most young people achieved fourth level in numeracy between 2016/17 and 2018/19. Senior leaders provided clear evidence which correlates data on achievement of a level at the end of S3 with attainment in the senior phase.
- Staff should continue to develop their understanding of CfE standards for third and fourth level. They should ensure professional judgements are based fully on robust and reliable evidence in line with national advice. The school should develop further approaches to moderation, including the use of Scottish National Standardised Assessments as a diagnostic tool to support improved understanding of standards.

##### Senior phase

- The headteacher is leading a climate of high expectations of young people and of staff. This is supporting strong attainment in the senior phase. There is a clear ethos of attainment across the school. Young people's progress towards National Qualifications is monitored closely at the senior phase. Staff across the school are required to analyse data and evaluate performance and use this information to identify next steps for departmental improvement or young people's learning.

##### Cohorts

- In the five-year period beginning 2014/15, the percentage of young people achieving numeracy at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better in S4 has improved steadily. The percentage achieving this in 2018/19 is the highest in the five-year period. Although attainment in literacy and numeracy of young people in S4, by S5 and by S6 each as a percentage of S4 roll, has been strong in this same period, it is generally in line with its virtual comparator (VC) in each measure.

##### Leavers

- Almost all young people achieved literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better in 2016/17 and 2017/18, demonstrating important improvements. The percentages are in line with those of the VC. In 2017/18 most young people leaving school had achieved literacy at SCQF level 6. The majority had achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy, an improvement on previous years, which brought the school in line with its VC. Almost all young people stay on to S5 and S6.

## Attainment over time

### BGE

- A school-wide tracking system has now been in place for eighteen months. This enables staff to record attainment data for all curriculum areas. Senior leaders and staff are now better placed to identify underperformance or attainment issues in the BGE. For example, the improved data for the BGE is helping staff to target support for young people more effectively. Senior leaders now need to work with staff to ensure that information recorded in the tracking system is robust and reliable.

### Senior phase

- The average total tariff scores for the middle achieving 60% and highest achieving 20% of leavers is significantly higher than the VC for 2016/17 and 2017/18. For the lowest achieving 20% of young people, the average total tariff score was significantly much higher than the VC in 2016/17 but declined in 2017/18 to being in line with the VC.

### Breadth and depth

- Attainment at S4 is strong and has been maintained at positive levels over recent years. From 2016/17 to 2018/19, most young people have been presented for eight National Qualifications. From 2014/15 to 2018/19 a majority achieved six or more qualifications at SCQF 5C or better, significantly much higher than the VC in each of these years. The percentages achieving six or more qualifications at 5A or better in the same time period is significantly much higher than the VC with the exception of 2018/19 which is significantly higher. Both the quantity and quality of qualifications at SCQF level 5 or better are higher than might be expected when considered against the VC.
- From 2016/17 to 2018/19 the majority of young people have been presented for five courses at S5. Approximately a half of the year group in each year were presented for five Highers. The percentage of young people achieving qualifications at SCQF 6C or better and 6A or better, by S5, declined from 2017/18 to 2018/19. The percentages achieving two or more and three or more qualifications at 6C or better has been significantly higher than the VC in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The percentages achieving four or more and five or more qualifications at 6C or better are now in line with the VC, having been significantly much higher than the VC in 2017/18. The percentages achieving one or more to five or more qualifications at 6A or better was significantly much higher than the VC in 2017/18 and significantly higher in 2018/19. The percentages achieving one or more to three or more qualifications at 6A or better has been significantly higher or much higher than the VC over the last four years.
- By S6, attainment is strong both in terms of the quantity and quality of qualifications achieved at SCQF level 6 or better and at level 7, particularly over the last two years.

### Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Almost all young people recognise that the school offers them opportunities to take part in activities beyond the classroom and timetabled day. They value these opportunities which broaden and deepen their knowledge and skills. High-quality partnerships with partner agencies, training providers and employers all contribute to the comprehensive and diverse range of activities offered to young people, including enhancing their achievements in skills for learning life and work. An increasing percentage of young people are taking part in sporting clubs from 2016/17 to 2018/19. This is leading to improvements in their fitness, gives them opportunities to try new activities, achieve improvements in their performance and meet new friends.
- Young people value opportunities to influence and contribute to their learning experiences, developing their capacity as effective contributors. These opportunities includes activities such

as serving on the pupil council, contributing views through focus groups, or carrying out roles as 'My World of Work' ambassadors. These opportunities are currently limited to a few young people. Senior leaders should work with staff and young people to enhance learners' achievements through a wide range of activities.

- The Youth Philanthropy Initiative is supporting young people in S3 raise their community awareness while developing confidence, public speaking skills and their ability to work more effectively as part of a team. Young people in S2 achieve the John Muir Award, which recognises their developing independence and personal responsibility. A few young people have gained national success in for example, mathematical and sporting competitions. Young people's volunteering contributions are recognised through formal accreditation with achievement of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award or a Saltire Award. A few young people develop skills for work by taking part in the Jobs Education and Training programme and others gain qualifications such as Foundation Apprenticeships. Both give young people valuable experience of working with employers while still attending school.
- As young people move to their final year in school they have increasing opportunities to develop leadership skills through, for example, their roles as House Captains, prefects, curriculum buddies and as 'mentors in violence prevention'. Acting as mentors, young people enhance the experiences of younger pupils in their personal and social education (PSE) classes and in social areas. These experiences enable senior pupils to develop confidence in delivering presentations, reflect on their own experiences and encourage younger peers to develop respect for each other. The successful introduction of the Junior Sports Leader award has provided a welcome addition to leadership roles for young people, complementing the Senior Sports Leader award. These programmes give the school a useful basis from which to enhance and develop further leadership skills and roles for young people across the school. Young people are keen to learn from these experiences, and are ready to benefit from increased opportunities to develop their leadership and other skills for life and work.
- Senior leaders have established approaches to record young people's participation in wider achievements, including clubs at lunchtime and after school. Young people are encouraged to inform staff of their achievements outwith school through the weekly PSE programme. Young people's achievements, from both within and outwith the school, are recognised and celebrated through awards ceremonies, the popular Sports Personality of the Year award and weekly assemblies. Teachers are delivering presentations at young people's assemblies, showcasing the range of skills that young people can develop through curriculum subject areas. This initiative should lead to staff being more able to help young people recognise more effectively how they are developing their skills for learning, life and work across the school.
- Senior leaders now need to progress with their plans to build on these developments, to monitor and track young people's skills development over time and to recognise young people's achievements in a more systematic way. The school should adopt a more strategic approach to planning wider achievements, to ensure that all young people participate, progress their skills and gain recognition and accreditation where appropriate.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Pupil support staff have a good knowledge of young people, their families and personal circumstances. They work together with the recently appointed coordinator of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF), to ensure that personal circumstances are not a barrier to attainment and achievement. The coordinator has produced a PEF plan with clear priorities and success criteria, to support targeted young people to make progress. This plan has yet to achieve its full impact. Weekly discussion takes place at 'Cause for Concern' meetings where staff discuss the needs of individuals, including strategies to support equity for all young people.



- Staff with special expertise relating to equity and potential barriers to learning, attainment and achievement have led professional learning sessions to increase whole-staff awareness. Further professional learning is required for all staff to fully understand the difference between equality and equity. Staff are becoming increasingly aware of the need to consider the range of economic factors affecting young people's attendance at school, to ensure equity of access for all learners. The school has plans to develop further the breakfast club which is currently being offered in mathematics. The plans include extending the offer to a wider range of young people within a nurturing environment. Effective partnership with Active Schools colleagues supports access to wider achievement in sports and clubs, including where cost may be a barrier.
- The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation profile indicates that most young people attending Boroughmuir High School live in deciles 9 and 10, those which are least socio-economically disadvantaged. A few young people live in deciles 1 to 8, numbers which are too small to allow an evaluation of the performance of the most disadvantaged young people with those least disadvantaged.
- Over the five-year period between 2013/4 and 2017/8, almost all young people who left the school moved to a positive destination in terms of employment, or continuing education or training. In 2017/18 the percentage doing so was in line with the VC having been significantly lower than the VC in 2016/17. The majority of young people leaving school progress to Higher Education.

## Other relevant evidence

Young people select course choices in S2 to begin to study for National Qualifications over S3 and S4. This narrowing of young people's choices too early, is not in keeping with relevant national guidance. This was discussed with the school's leaders.

## 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.