Summarised inspection findings

Graeme High School

Falkirk Council

11 August 2020

School name   Graeme High School
Council: Falkirk Council
SEED number: 5746132
Roll (Sep 2018):   1073

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.
Exclusions are generally below the national average.
In February 2019, 14.5% of pupils were registered for free school meals, which is in line with the national average of 15%.
In September 2018 19.8% of pupils lived in the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.
In September 2018 the school reported that 27.2% of pupils had additional support needs.

Key contextual information

Graeme High School is a six-year comprehensive school which serves the East and South of Falkirk and the communities of Polmont, Westquarter, Hallglen and Whitecross. The roll in 2018/19 included 45% of pupils who lived in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1-3.

1.3 Leadership of change	very good

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 school's vision, values and aims are a well-judged interpretation of the needs of its young people and their community. The vision is aspirational in its ambitions for positive learning experiences and outcomes for young people. The school has identified a useful summary as 'Aspire, Attain and Achieve', providing the school community with an accessible and memorable focus.

- Senior leaders have guided and overseen an effective, inclusive approach to creating the school vision. They have drawn appropriately on contributions from young people, parents and carers, staff and a wide range of partners. This helpful approach has had the effect of giving a sense of collegiality and ownership to all those with an investment in the school's progress.

- The values of respect, kindness, honesty, responsibility, determination and excellence, provide a purposeful basis for the school's work. Importantly, these values are evident in the daily behaviours and attributes of staff and almost all young people. For example, young people are consistently courteous and helpful to visitors to the school, and respectful of peers and staff.

- Looking forwards, the school should continue to focus on specific values, for example responsibility, to enhance further young people's ability to take a lead in their own learning. The school's important work on supporting young people's mental health, involving young people in central, leading roles, is helping to strengthen their resilience and determination.

- The school aims reflect the schools context. These include equality and equity, wellbeing, inclusion and participation, and a voice for all its community. They reflect, accurately, core Articles from the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child. The aims are evident in the school's strategic approaches to improving its performance, in meeting the needs of all its pupils. Young people speak confidently about specific Articles, and can describe examples of how they drive positive improvements in their experiences and outcomes.

- More generally, the significant progress made in the programme of rights-based education has brought a range of benefits. Staff have developed an improved understanding of barriers to young people's learning, including those associated with economic or social disadvantage. As a result, staff's collaborative work with young people has underpinned important developments in the school and community. This includes a strong focus on equity, nurture and provision to support mental health.

- Partners have a good understanding of the social and economic context of the school. They provide young people with additional learning experiences that enhance the school offer, for example in the engineering and care sectors. Individual departments across the school have built positive relationships with a range of local employers and community partners. As a consequence, young people are progressing on to volunteering and employment. However,

there is scope to involve partners more effectively in planning and evaluation across the school.

- Community Learning and Development (CLD) staff work with the school closely to support young people's learning. A joint agreement defines the CLD offer for young people and plans are in place to review progress and evaluate impact with the school. Through the Connect and Stay Connected programmes, CLD staff support parents to engage with the high school as part of their child's transition from primary school. Parents now feel more confident to approach the school about their child's learning. For a few parents, this has been key in helping their child settle into Graeme High School.

- Staff have identified family learning as a priority in the school improvement plan. The Family Learning School Improvement team, involving teachers and the CLD worker oversees family learning programmes across the school. A family learning festival in 2019 attracted over 300 families. The school improvement plan reflects a clear plan to develop family learning further.

- The school has highly effective approaches to evaluating performance and planning for improvement. Senior and middle leaders have developed important skills in gathering and analysing key data about young people's progress and attainment through the broad general education (BGE) and senior phase. All staff have been involved in enhancing their capacity to analyse performance information to identify areas for improvements. This includes using the national Insight senior phase attainment data resource.

- There are well-established, effective approaches to seeking the views of stakeholders, including through a variety of surveys. Senior leaders demonstrate skills in analysing the outcomes of these surveys, and sound judgement in taking appropriate action to address priority concerns. The school's system of validated self-evaluation has contributed well to the approaches to improvement planning. Senior leaders have drawn on the strength of those perspectives offered by a wider group of professional partners, to give added momentum to the school's improvement planning.

- Senior and middle leaders routinely gather Information about the strengths in learning, teaching and assessment around the school. Some of this information comes from direct observation of classroom practice. The school uses proven approaches such as peer observation, mentoring and coaching, and a wide range of professional learning strategies to address areas for development. School improvement planning includes a range of strategies for achieving further improvements in the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. This will be central to the school's work in raising attainment.

- Strategic improvement planning is based on effective approaches to self-evaluation, including significant involvement of stakeholders. The school improvement plan sets out an appropriately focused set of priorities, with clearly identified outcomes. The plan's detailed structure provides a useful framework on which previous years' achievements can be summarised, and future targets planned, tracked, confirmed and evaluated. Staff contribute to specific improvement teams, continuing to build a widespread sense of ownership. Clear priorities are set out in departmental improvement plans which are appropriately supported by detail in terms of effective process and intended outcomes.

- Senior leaders demonstrate strong teamwork and high quality leadership which is driving continuing improvement in the school. Middle leaders with curricular and pastoral responsibilities make important contributions to leading change in the school. Their contributions are forward looking, going beyond coordination and management functions, into active pursuit of improvements in their faculties' practices. Teaching staff make a wide range of

contributions to leadership of change. This includes their commitment to aspects of research based firmly in the realities of their classroom practice. A number of staff support continuing improvement through the specific, well-focused role of attainment advisor. These posts provide staff with another opportunity to enhance their leadership skills.

- The wider team of administrative, technician and support staff play a key role in supporting effective change in the school. The team benefit from high quality leadership, actively encouraging professional learning and providing a range of positive role models for staff and young people. The team is fully involved in continuous self-evaluation, in keeping with the school's wider commitment to performance management and improvement.

- Young people's contributions to leading change are strong, enabled by a broad spectrum of leadership opportunities. Significant numbers of young people take part in the Leadership Academy, which provides them with worthwhile, challenging experiences from S1 to S6. School captains play key roles, acting as role models for younger peers and taking a strong lead in, for example, the school's growing agenda on sustainability. Appropriately, the school offers opportunities for accreditation at SCQF level 6 for young people's leadership achievements.

- There is evidence of the proactive, effective implementation of change across the range of the school's work. These changes are guided by, and responsive to, the school's vision, values and aims. Implementing these improvements has had the effect of reinforcing the school's unique identity, and also supporting its claim to place young people's needs at the heart of its business.

- The curriculum has been subject to change which has been well-judged and developed at an appropriate pace. Alongside ongoing improvements across curricular areas, staff have remained aware of the need to adopt important national priorities such as developing the young workforce (DYW).There has been some important progress in this area, working closely with partners to broaden the range of opportunities available to young people.

- A wide range of initiatives to improve young people's experiences and outcomes has impacted significantly on their wellbeing and achievements. These initiatives include aspects of pastoral care, such as provision for nurture and support for targeted young people. Staff seek out programmes and approaches to meet young people's needs, for example in terms of rights-based education to promote equity. The school has developed some commendable, proportionate approaches to recognise and address adverse effects on young people's mental health.

- The effective management of change in the school is clearly reflected in the staff's confidence and sense of positive morale. Young people offer many significant examples of improvements in which they have played a key part, for example in developing an awareness of important topical issues such as learning for sustainability. This highlights the effectiveness with which young people in the school can influence change. Such opportunities enhance young people's capacities as responsible citizens and as confident, accomplished leaders now and in the future.

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

■ Very positive relationships are evident throughout the school community. There is a calm and purposeful learning environment, reflecting the ambitious aspiration of the school for all young people and staff. Young people are responsible, respectful and confident. Young people and staff are proud of their school.

■ In most lessons, tasks are well matched to learners' needs. Almost all young people are motivated and engaged in their learning when activities are appropriately challenging. School leaders should continue to further develop teachers' approaches to meeting learners' needs. In a few lessons, there is a need for increased pace and challenge.

■ Most young people enjoy learning at school. They participate well in class discussions and when working individually and in groups. In a few lessons, young people lead learning effectively through collaborative group work with their peers. Whilst almost all young people are willing learners, on occasion they are not actively engaged in their learning. Across the school, there is scope for young people to take more responsibility for what and how they learn.

■ Young people have a key role in supporting school improvement, for example, in pupil voice conferences. Staff regularly seek their views about learning and teaching. Young people's feedback is used to improve courses to meet their needs and interests more effectively. Most young people speak positively about their learning in classes and their opportunities for learning beyond lessons. They appreciate the extensive range of opportunities on offer to them to lead and contribute to the wider life of the community.

■ In almost all classes, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. Teachers are developing their skills in questioning effectively. In a minority of classes, teachers use questioning skilfully to help young people develop higher-order thinking skills. This good practice should be shared more widely across the school.

■ Senior leaders' approaches to developing learning, teaching and assessment are a strength. The co-construction of the learning, teaching and assessment framework is helping staff to develop a shared understanding of what is expected in all classrooms. Teachers are using approaches based on educational research. Senior leaders actively encourage staff to look outwards. Staff collaborate highly effectively with school colleagues and with others from across the cluster and beyond.

■ Staff have a clear focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching. The extensive range of professional learning activities contributes to this improvement agenda. All teachers participate in a well-planned programme of career-long professional learning to support the school's improvement priorities for learning and teaching. Almost all teachers are participating

in practitioner enquiry relating to aspects of learning and teaching. A few teachers have formed a professional reading group and are deepening their knowledge by reflecting critically on current educational research. Staff model lifelong-learning which the young people recognise and value.

■ A few teachers use digital approaches creatively to enhance young people's learning experiences. Teachers are increasingly using digital platforms and applications to support young people's learning by sharing resources and homework tasks. The digital improvement team are supporting this work. The school recognises the need to develop further the use of digital technology to enhance learning and teaching.

■ Teachers provide support and challenge through a range of feedback activities. These include written, oral and, increasingly, digital feedback. Most young people receive feedback which helps them to improve their learning. Young people value learning conversations, including those which set helpful targets. These support young people to evaluate their own progress and identify their next steps in learning. Teachers' increased use of high-quality plenary sessions should help young people to understand and reflect on their learning during lessons.

■ Young people speak positively about the support and encouragement they receive from their teachers to help them achieve. They highly value opportunities such as supported study, the learning café and Easter school. These approaches complement well the school's effective provision for young people requiring additional support for their learning.

■ Young people are developing a wide range of skills in most curriculum areas and through their participation in a wide range of leadership roles. The school's skills framework provides an opportunity to embed the language and development of skills within learning in all classrooms. Senior leaders should ensure that the framework is applied consistently by all staff. This should allow young people to improve their understanding and communicate how their developing skills contribute to future learning and career pathways.

■ Teachers use a range of assessment approaches effectively to determine progress in young people's learning. In the BGE, teachers use experiences and outcomes linked to National Benchmarks in planning learning and assessment for young people. A range of assessment evidence, including the Scottish National Standardised Assessments, is used to support decisions for planning appropriate next steps and strategies to be implemented. Young people would benefit from being clear about the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level they are working at. Senior and middle leaders should ensure that planning allows most young people to experience aspects of their learning at fourth curriculum level by the end of S3.

■ All faculties participate in regular planned subject moderation activities. This helps to improve staff confidence in making valid and reliable assessment judgements about young people's progress. A few departments work with associated primary schools to develop teaching methodologies and a shared understanding about standards and expectations. Senior leaders should continue to ensure moderation activity is systematically planned for staff and they have an opportunity to work with colleagues beyond the school.

■ In the senior phase, almost all staff have a clear understanding of expected standards in National Qualifications (NQs). A significant number of staff have Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) roles and responsibilities. They support colleagues by sharing national expectations and providing advice. All faculties undertake appropriate verification activities.

■ The school has a comprehensive tracking and monitoring system. This allows staff to track and monitor young people's progress across the BGE and the senior phase. Three times per academic session, attainment data is collected across all curriculum areas. All staff have access to the recorded progress of young people. They can access information about young people's barriers to learning to inform their planning. Faculties collect and moderate BGE assessment information. However, their practice is currently too varied and inconsistent.

■ In the senior phase, middle leaders regularly evaluate the data to identify whether young people are progressing as expected in their courses. Appropriate strategies are designed to support identified young people in achieving their expected grades.

■ Over time, the wider achievements of young people, both in and out-of-school, are recorded systematically. The school is beginning to track progress in young people's skills development.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The school's curriculum is designed around the school's well-considered vision, values and aims. The ambition for all young people to 'Aspire, Attain and Achieve' encourages all learners to develop their potential, widen their horizons and build a positive future. Learning pathways lead to positive and sustained destinations for almost all young people. The curriculum is reviewed regularly together with all stakeholders.

- Young people from S1 to S3 experience a broad general education with a wide range of progressive courses. Specialisation takes place in S3 to support additional depth and challenge with most learners working at CfE fourth level. Senior staff should re-emphasise to all staff that that the focus for learning in S3 is on deep learning within CfE framework and should not prioritise, solely, NQ requirements.

- In S3 young people choose eight subjects across all curriculum areas. However, young people at present do not receive their full entitlement to learn across all eight curriculum areas to the end of S3. There is a need to ensure that there is an appropriate learning pathway for the few young people in S3 who require further consolidation of third level experiences and outcomes Curriculum and pastoral transitions are strong at all stages.

- Graeme High School leads an elite "Performance School of Football" programme from S1 to S4 in partnership with the Scottish Football Association. Selected learners, from across central Scotland, follow an amended school timetable to enable them to develop their football skills in greater depth.

- A 'widening achievement' column offers young people further choice to enhance their skills in the senior phase. Staff enable learners in S4 to use skills gained for SQA National 5 accreditation to gain additional certification. For example, learners in art and design, music and drama can be presented for a National 5 creative industries award.

- Staff across the personal support team have developed a relevant and progressive Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme for use across the BGE. Young people in S5 and S6 currently do not experience regular progressive learning of PSE but access targeted aspects of PSE through their curriculum. Senior leaders regularly review the programme to ensure that all young people from S1–S6 have access to a range of relevant learning inputs which address core areas of personal and social development.

- Religious and moral education (RME) is planned in line with statutory requirements for the delivery of Religious Education in non-denominational schools. Staff understand they need to ensure the development and delivery of an appropriate RME curriculum for S5/6.

- There are currently a few interdisciplinary projects to support young people to make valuable links in their learning, for example, in art and design and English language. Staff continue to develop interdisciplinary learning using measurable outcomes based on well-considered outcomes and experiences.

- Outdoor learning activities are developing well, particularly for targeted learners. These activities act as a further creative stimulus to widen learning. A strong focus is placed on health and wellbeing with all young people receiving two hours of high-quality physical education per week in S1 to S4. Additionally, young people in S5 and S6 benefit from a variety of health and wellbeing electives. Staff agree that the curriculum offer for S5 and S6 needs to be developed

- Curriculum pathways support learners who wish to build skills towards a particular career interest. For example, S4 pupils complete units in City and Guilds in the Bike Academy, or complete the Introduction to Hair and Beauty programme.

- Young people from S1 to S3 are not receiving their entitlement to modern languages in line with the government 1+2 policy. Presently all pupils do not need to choose a discrete modern language in S3 and can study French solely as part of a wider learning rota. Staff should revisit the principles and practice documents for modern languages and review the present provision to ensure sufficient depth of learning.

- In the senior phase, all learners are offered a wide range of bespoke pathways. This includes an offer of SQA Advanced Highers which can be taken either in school or at another local authority school through consortium arrangements. In S4, most learners select eight courses leading to qualifications. In S5 and S6, learners are timetabled together with most young people selecting five courses.

- Senior phase pathways take good account of the diverse needs and aspirations of young people. A few subject teachers are incorporating labour market information about related and relevant careers well within lessons. Young people are provided with effective careers information and advice. The Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Careers Adviser provides valued, high-quality support to the school. Arrangements to negotiate and review the School Partnership Agreements are used productively to determine partnership working and interventions to support young people. A traditional work experience approach for S4 pupils has been replaced with a model which takes better account of individual pupil needs and aspirations. Very productive partnership between SDS and Forth Valley College is providing young people with effective guidance and support to ease transition to a full-time college-based provision. The sciences, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM) team works enthusiastically and productively with the DYW lead, employers, SDS and the college to forge joint arrangements for invigorating and enhancing the curriculum.

- Staff develop curriculum pathways well, adding new courses annually such as Early Learning and Childcare at National 4 and 5, and Skills for Work Engineering at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 4 and 5.

- All faculties have engaged in the development of young people's literacy skills as the responsibility for all, led by the English department. A range of practical advice has been provided to staff, including strategies to support extended writing and presentation skills. Staff should now evaluate the impact of the developments already in place to ascertain next steps. The school librarian is proactive in supporting literacy learning in the school.

- Teachers in the mathematics department lead the teaching and assessment of numeracy across the school. Joint assessment and moderation activities are planned and delivered with colleagues from the sciences, technology and cluster primary schools. This is supporting staff's understanding and confidence in making professional judgements. Strong links between the STEM subject areas are helping young people to understand the relevance of numeracy skills. As planned, teachers should continue to explore relevant and meaningful numeracy links across the school to enable young people to develop their numeracy skills in challenging and unfamiliar contexts.

■ The PSE is presently being reviewed. All learners from S1 to S4 learn for one period a week through a variety of progressive learning topics including understanding substance misuse, and sexual health and relationships. Staff recognise further work is needed to improve the course offer at S5/S6.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ The school has a very active and supportive Parent Council who feel involved in the life and work of the school. Members of the council provide feedback on important school matters to the parent body. Senior leaders consult with the parent body on a range of issues to seek their views on, for example, the school improvement plan and key initiatives to improve attainment and achievement. Senior leaders also regularly engage with the Parent Council, providing key information on school matters including, most recently, the mental health strategy, parental empowerment and skills development. Almost all parents report that the school has a welcoming ethos and they feel that nurturing approaches taken by staff support their children well.

■ Parents have a range of valuable opportunities to develop their understanding of the their child's learning through, for example, family learning events. This helps parents develop an understanding of the approaches to learning and teaching in Graeme High School and how they might support learning at home. Moving forward, staff should now consider how best to develop this work further, including the development of the 'roadshow' approach to reach those families who face challenges accessing the school.

■ Parents are well-informed of the work of the school which communicates with parents and carers in a range of ways including the use of social media, emails, phonecalls, newsletters and the school's website. The school continues to seek new and innovative ways to communicate effectively with parents.

■ The school acts swiftly to intervene when a child or family requires extra support. This includes, for example, signposting families to external organisations who can assist them, implementing in-house support or helping families to find a solution that works for their child. Parents report that they appreciate bespoke arrangements for transition from P7 into secondary school for those young people who find it most challenging.

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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	very good

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

■ Senior leaders and staff have reviewed and redesigned structures, strategies and facilities to ensure improved approaches to improving wellbeing outcomes for young people. This is helping to meet the needs of all young people in a more focused, planned and streamlined way. As a result, young people are very aware of where they can access help and advice where required. Staff across the school provide a safe, nurturing learning environment which enables almost all young people to achieve success in line with their needs and aspirations. The school's values underpin these approaches. Almost all young people feel safe in the school and majority report that the school helps them to understand the perspectives of others. Frequent, robust universal and targeted approaches to monitoring and progress in learning results in all staff being aware of the needs of young people.

■ All faculty heads have a key role in the support system along with personal support staff. This ensures a continuous flow of information to support individual pupils from personal support staff through to subject areas. The school ensures that partners are kept fully updated on the impact of their work with the young people

■ Almost all teachers understand well the purpose of the support strategies for young people that exist across the school. The majority of teachers promote wellbeing very effectively as a responsibility of all. Staff should continue to embed this area of responsibility more consistently across all aspects of young people's learning experiences. Ongoing monitoring of young people's progress is conducted through the very well planned conversations between senior leaders and support staff. In addition, 'house classes' throughout the session help to provide opportunities for young people to engage with key staff about their progress and wellbeing. Where young people require support, advice and guidance on an unplanned basis, a range of personal support staff and other professionals are available in the school's personal support hub. Young people rely on this very effective, flexible approach to universal support which keeps them engaged in their learning using a variety of supportive approaches.

■ Staff are supporting young people very well to develop their awareness of wellbeing, especially in the BGE. Young people from S1 to S3, use wellbeing webs effectively to reflect and comment on their progress in feeling safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included. Heads of house staff use these webs to identify, assess and revisit young people's needs and plan appropriate interventions. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to ensure all young people experience and can articulate progress they are making through the wellbeing indicators, as they move through the school.

■ A significant majority of teaching and support staff have undertaken professional learning to build capacity and support for young people, focusing on aspects of promoting positive mental health. The school now has in place a very effective mental health strategy – 'Mind Space'.

This area of the school's work that has been developing over the past two years is a strength. This is resulting in young people, staff and parents building knowledge, confidence and openness to discussing and addressing a wide range of mental health issues. The central aim is that all stakeholders across the school community are equipped to deal better with mental health issues which can act as a barrier to a young person's ability to thrive.

- Over a third of staff are trained as mental health first aid trainers. They use these valuable skills very effectively to build resilience, knowledge and capacity across groups of staff and young people. Leaders of the school's mental health 'Mind Space' strategy have successfully designed 'Go 2' logos and badges. These identify key places and people throughout the school, where young people know they can access help if they have a concern or wish to speak to an adult. Commendably, a group of senior pupils is developing a very useful filmed resource to promote awareness of mental health and wellbeing. Once fully developed, teachers across the local authority primary schools will use this filmed resource as a central support to raising awareness around mental health with young people. Senior pupils are developing this innovative resource as part of a Personal Development award. This group of young people work closely with professional partners in the film industry, as well as key professionals who work with mental health to inform the quality and robustness of their resource.

- The PSE programme focuses on developing young people's awareness and understanding of relationships and sexual health, substance misuse and a range of topical issues connected to wellbeing and making good life choices.

- Opportunities to be active and take part in clubs and other activities support young people's mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing.

- Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of statutory requirements and codes of practice regarding wellbeing, equality and inclusion. School policies are up-to-date, clear and refer to recent local and national guidance.

- Young people in S5 and S6 are not currently experiencing progressive learning in RME in line with statutory guidance. Nutritional requirements for food in school are being met with only a few exceptions. These were discussed with staff in school and actions agreed to ensure full compliance.

- Almost all young people and staff live the school values in their everyday interactions with one another. Across most classes, there is a very supportive climate and ethos for learning, underpinned by positive relationships and a shared commitment from young people and staff to embrace equality. There is a relentless whole-school focus on the wellbeing of all young people and staff across the school community. This is resulting in improving engagement with learning and with the support of recent additional resources, improving attendance at school. Additionally, a robust approach to monitoring and tracking is supporting these improvements for those young people most at risk.

- Highly effective systems for information-sharing help to ensure that young people with protected characteristics are well supported. Young people who face potential barriers to success in their learning are able to access the curriculum at a pace suited to their individual needs. An increasing number of young people who face challenges in their learning and wellbeing are having positive learning experiences and are being successful.

- Almost all young people act as responsible citizens who show respect for others and understand different beliefs and cultures. They are developing informed, ethical views of

complex issues, are knowledgeable about equalities issues, and are confident in challenging discriminatory attitudes. An enthusiastic group of young people, supported appropriately by staff members run a LGBT+ group helping to develop a greater understanding of issues such as diversity and discrimination. The young people involved in developing this high-profile group across the school are becoming involved in delivering regular and helpful LGBT+ awareness inputs to cluster primary schools. This highly commendable outreach work delivered by the young people is helping to address stereotypes and break down barriers with LGBT+ issues across the local community and beyond. Senior leaders should continue to monitor and evaluate approaches to valuing and celebrating equality and diversity, and challenging discrimination.

■ Almost all young people are included well in the wider life of the school and believe that they are treated fairly and with respect. The school provides a wide range of clubs. Work experience and activities for every member of the school community. Young people speak confidently about the ways in which these experiences prepare them to lead aspects of school's improvement priorities. For example, through their prominent roles as charity leaders and Mentors in Violence Prevention mentors. Partners are supporting very effectively improvements in young people's mental health awareness at Graeme High School and cluster primaries. Senior pupils, as peer mentors, work well with children from cluster primaries. They talk confidently about how they support younger children to cope with issues, such as anxiety and resilience.

■ Senior leaders, in partnership with young people and stakeholders, have developed a whole-school anti-bullying policy, which reflects local and national guidance. Senior leaders and staff have taken positive steps to work in collaboration with young people to embed this policy. Commendably, young people in the senior phase are working well with younger pupils to promote a better understanding of the importance of supporting each other in a fully inclusive environment. Senior leaders and staff should continue to promote all aspects of this policy across the school community, so that all young people feel safe and supported.

■ Staff work intensively within a nurture base to support young people and their families. Creative approaches to supporting inclusion, including 'Paws for Progress' and 'Baking Back' are leading to improvements in engagement, resilience and an important decrease in exclusions. A support hub houses a number of school staff and partners, including the campus police officer, attendance officer and careers advisor. Staff based in the hub help young people and their families to feel well supported and valued. They also help young people to develop self-esteem and achieve positive outcomes, including improved attendance. Senior and middle leaders, as part of the re-structuring programme, have also developed the 'Learning Zone.' This provision supports young people's learning and attainment in preparation for returning to full class timetables. Senior leaders and middle leaders agree that further links between the 'Learning Zone' and all departments are required to ensure that the needs of young people are met in all curricular areas.

■ A well-planned transition programme from primary to secondary school is in place with enhanced and bespoke arrangements as required. Transition arrangements support young people requiring additional support very well. Senior and middle leaders review and adjust the provision of targeted support on a regular basis to ensure the needs of all young people are met.

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
- There is a positive and improving picture of attainment in literacy and numeracy in the BGE.

BGE
- In 2019, the school reports that almost all young people achieved CfE third level or better in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. In 2019, by the end of S3, most young people achieved fourth level in listening and talking, reading and writing and the majority achieved this in numeracy. Over a four-year period, attainment was strongest in 2019. Senior leaders are confident in the reliability of the CfE data from 2019. There is scope for the school to develop a more extended approach to moderation activity, and to consolidate existing arrangements and practice.

- Teachers use the National Benchmarks to support their professional judgement of achievement of a level and moderate their judgements within their departments to ensure reliability. Faculties use a range of approaches to track and monitor the progress of young people to identify those who may require support. A whole-school tracking system ensures that senior leaders, deputy heads of house and associated faculty leads have a strategic overview of the progress of young people across all curricular areas in the BGE. They identify those young people who require additional support in order to progress and improve their outcomes. Faculties use a range of in-house tracking systems to monitor the progress of young people and report into the whole-school system during three tracking periods annually.

Senior phase
Literacy
- Almost all young people have left school having achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy from 14/15 to 18/19. In the latest four years, almost all young people are achieving this through a course award. The percentage of young people achieving literacy at SCQF level 4 or better was significantly much higher than the virtual comparator (VC) in 2015/16 and significantly higher than the VC in both 2016/17 and in 2017/18. There is a decline in the latest year to being in line with VC. At SCQF level 5 or better in literacy, most young people left school achieving at this level from 15/16 to 18/19. In each of these years, the attainment is in line with the VC. At SCQF level 6, the school is in line with the VC.

Numeracy
- In numeracy, almost all leavers achieved SCQF level 4 or better over the last four years. Achievement in numeracy at this level was significantly much higher or significantly higher than the VC in 16/17 and 17/18. At SCQF level 5 or better, there are improvements in numeracy from 14/15, with most young people achieving at this level in the latest two years. Achievement

in these two years at SCQF level 5 or better is significantly much higher than the VC through the unit award. At SCQF level 6, the school is in line with the VC for numeracy.

Attainment over time
BGE.

■ A whole school tracking system can be accessed by all staff to monitor young people's progression across all subject areas in the BGE. Robust tracking and monitoring process at whole school level ensures that there is a strategic overview of learner progress enabling senior leaders and faculty heads to identify patterns in learners' attainment and support those young people who are not progressing appropriately.

■ Young people are supported by teachers to understand the progress they are making through the BGE. This supports their learning and next steps and informs their subject choices in the senior phase. At regular house meetings, learners who are not on track are discussed, and appropriate interventions and supports are put in place, including, for example, bespoke timetabling arrangements and access to a range of programmes and resources.

■ Senior leaders should monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and consistency of departmental monitoring and tracking systems to ensure the reliability of the data they provide. Additionally, there is a need to monitor and evaluate more closely, the impact of interventions adopted at departmental level for those young people identified through teacher professional judgement as not progressing appropriately in the BGE.

Senior phase

■ Measured by the average complementary tariff scores, leavers from Graeme High School attained mainly in line with the VC over a five-year period. For the lowest attaining 20%, there are improvements from 14/15 until 17/18. There was a decline in attainment for this group in 18/19 but attainment is still in line with the VC. The middle attaining 60% and the highest attaining 20% of leavers attained in line with the VC over the past five years.

■ For the lowest attaining 20% in S4, there were year on year improvements from 2015/16 until 2017/18 when young people's attainment was significantly higher than the VC. The middle attaining 60% of young people in S4, performed significantly higher than the VC in 17/18. By S5, there were improvements in performance for the lowest attaining 20% from 2014/15 2017/18. The middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people attained in line with the VC over the past five years. By S6, the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% are attaining in line with the VC over a five year period. The performance of the highest attaining 20% has improved in the past two years to being in line with the VC from a position of being significantly lower than the VC in 2016/17.

■ Senior leaders have identified, as an area for development, the need to continually monitor the number of young people being presented for qualifications, actively working to increase expectations and aspirations. Senior leaders are also committed to ensuring that all young people are appropriately coursed into the correct level of course in the senior phase to maximise success within their suite of qualifications.

Breadth and depth

■ In 2017/18, the school moved to offering young people the opportunity to choose eight courses leading to qualifications in S4, Most young people achieved seven or more qualifications at SCQF level 4 or better in the last two years. The percentage of young people gaining four or more to seven or more qualifications decreased slightly in 18/19. However in 17/18 and in 18/19 the percentage of young people achieving four or more to seven or more qualifications at

SCQF level 4 or better was significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC .The percentage of young people gaining one to five qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better, is mostly in line with the VC over the past five years. At five or more and six or more qualifications, the school has improved the level of presentations year on year over a five year period since 2014/15 and resulted in a greater percentage of young people achieving qualifications at this level.

- Qualifications in, for example leadership, employability and sport have increased opportunities for young people in Graeme High School to undertake a greater variety of courses and as a result, most young people in S4 gained a higher number of qualifications than the national average in 2018 and in 2019.

- By S5, the 17/18 and 18/19 figures show an improvement on young people achievement of qualifications at SCQF level 6C or better and 6A or better. These improved to be in line with the VC, having been significantly lower than the VC in 16/17 for one or more to five or more qualifications. In the latest year, while still in line with the VC, there was a decrease in the percentage of young people gaining these awards

- By S6, in 18/19 there are improvements in the percentage of young people gaining qualifications at SCQF level 6C or better and SCQF level 6A or better and SCQF level 7C or better. At SCQF level 7C or better the school has improved from being significantly lower in 16/17 to being in line with the VC in the latest two years.

- Senior and middle leaders are very aware of the need to improve both presentation levels and attainment for young people in the senior phase and are currently implementing a number of strategies to improve both in these areas. These include, for example, an 'Inspire' programme to maximise opportunities for young people to access support, an increasing use of subject networks to support professional learning and the intelligent use of data to identify areas for development within subjects.
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- Graeme High School has, over a number of years, increased opportunities for young people to gain accreditation and awards for vocational courses through a broader course offer within and beyond the school. This is developing a wider range of skills for young people and improving their chances of employability or life chances. This is enabling the school to support all young people in aligning relevant subject choices and progression with their career aspirations. The school should continue to empower curricular leaders to look outwards, engaging with other establishments, local and national partners and national agencies to seek yet further opportunities for joint working and increase accreditation opportunities for young people. This should ensure that young people's choices in their areas of study are further extended and that courses are well matched to their ability and future aspirations. Additionally, this will to help raise attainment for young people in and improve their life chances.

Overall quality of learner's achievements
- Across the school, young people benefit from a wide range of opportunities to achieve. Most participate in after-school and lunchtime clubs, and many progress to achieving certification through school achievement awards. As they progress through the school, young people are becoming more confident and exercise responsibility through well-developed leadership programmes. In the last year, over 350 young people took part in the leadership academy. Younger pupils learn social responsibility through fundraising for charities and supplying hampers to the local community at Christmas. Success is celebrated through assemblies, prize giving and 'Pupil of the Month' award. Young people contribute to decision-making across

Falkirk in partnership with elected members and senior officers of the local authority. They feel empowered and supported by the school.

- Young people achieve well through sports. A recent focus on improving the participation of girls is showing positive results. As they progress through the school, young people are encouraged to become coaches and lead others. A few young people are now leading dance sessions after school. They introduced a 'dancer of the week' award to increase participation. Through the 'Falkirk Future Stars' programme, a group of senior pupils are delivering sports activities to primary schools. Most are achieving coaching and sports leader awards. Opportunities to achieve are also integral to other clubs run by the school. Young people in the Samba Band are learning skills and performing in public. The 'Design, Make and Sell' Club participants design products for sale in the school and wider community.

- Young people exercise responsibility as they progress through the school. Leadership programmes encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. Whilst the school has established a skills framework, this is not yet being tracked systematically to ensure that its impact is embedded across the school. The school is starting to track young people's achievements. Participation levels across the school are high with most young people taking part in at least one club or activity. Participation outside school is also tracked as is non-participation. This should give the school a solid foundation on which to build.

Equity for all learners
- Staff place a very strong focus on raising the attainment of all learners, especially for the majority of learners who live in areas with the highest socio-economic disadvantage. They ensure that any young person facing barriers to their learning, because of personal or socio-economic factors, is well supported. This includes ensuring that learners have access to a healthy breakfast. Staff know their learners well, and put strong measures in place to ensure that every young person has a chance to achieve their potential. They take good account of the diverse needs of young people especially those who face ongoing barriers to learning.

- Staff are proactive in providing all young people with access to equipment and personal items, such as uniforms. Senior leaders recognise the importance of providing opportunities for all young people to attend a wide range of school trips locally and abroad. They ensure that all young people can access the full range of curriculum activities that support learning and wellbeing regardless of cost. Senior leaders and pupil support staff, working closely with parents, should continue to encourage all eligible young people to access their entitlement to, for example, free schools meals and clothing grant.

Attainment versus deprivation
- The SIMD profile indicates that a majority of young people live in deciles 1 to 5. In September 2018, a minority of young people lived in deciles 9 and 10. For those learners from the most challenging socio-economic backgrounds in deciles 1 and 2, a variety of additional support is in place. This includes the addition of an Easter study week, the use of bus vouchers and a well-supported learning café. Strong learning interventions in place, paid for through the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF), are resulting in improved achievement for learners. In Graeme High School in 2019, young people living in decile 1, by the end of S4 and S5, performed significantly higher than young people living in the same deciles across Scotland. PEF funding is supporting learners through the provision of additional resources. This includes a residential maths camp and useful digital resources. There is no cost for identified learners in music, technology and home economics. The school's equity banks, including the uniform bank and physical education kit bank, mitigate the cost of the school day for young people facing economic challenge. Attendance is steady overall and slightly below the national average in 2017. The school provided figures for 2018/19 showing a slight improvement from the previous year. Staff

understand the need to keep a strong focus on improving attendance to support the raising achievement agenda.

Initial leaver destinations

■ Positive destinations for leavers over 14/15 to 18/19 is almost always in line with the VC Almost all learners have achieved a positive initial destination in three of these years, including the two most recent years. In 2018 and 2019, a majority of learners left school for either higher education or further education. For the 40% of leavers going into employment in 2019, this included employment in technical and engineering jobs. Staff are developing very strong partnerships with a variety of partners including Forth Valley College and various universities. Staff and partners mentor young people in the senior phase with the aim of achieving 100% positive destinations for leavers. Young people are supported well by SDS. Activities provided are supporting young people's understanding of the skills required for the world of work effectively.

Exclusions

■ Exclusion levels in 16/17 were well below the national figure. From the school's own figures, exclusions continue to fall.

| **School Empowerment** |
| **■** Staff leadership |

■ Staff's many contributions to leadership are a feature of the work of the school, and convey a convincing sense of empowerment. Staff at all levels, including the wider support and administrative teams, feel their contributions to leadership are expected and welcomed. Equally importantly, staff also feel motivated, supported and facilitated when they take on leadership roles. Collectively, their contributions to the school's evolution and ongoing improvement are significant, impacting positively on curriculum development, young people's breadth of experience, and provision for their care and welfare. All staff take on aspects of practitioner enquiry, enhancing their own skills and adding to the school's corporate effectiveness. Most teachers take on proactive roles in the school's improvement teams, many of which are led by non-promoted staff. Senior leaders promote collegiate working within and beyond the school team, for example responding positively to staff's aspiration to work with a wider group of colleagues from other schools.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Supporting pupils to attain and achieve

Young people attending Graeme High School benefit from learning in an ethos which supports their wellbeing through a nurturing environment where rights are central. Staff and pupils have a strong understanding of GIRFEC and wellbeing; these are well embedded across the school community.

Universal support is delivered through an effective in-house structure which includes all promoted staff, curricular and pastoral, providing effective support for pupils and families. Through a Support Hub, all young people have access to support from their Pastoral PT, Attendance Officer, Careers Advisor and Campus Police Officer. The school's strategic and creative approaches to mental health are supported by staff at all levels through 'Mind Space', and 35 staff are recognised 'Go2s'. Staff are strongly committed to enhancing equity and rights; establishing Uniform, Books and Toiletries Banks, and encouraging parents and carers actively to access entitlement to free school meals supported by the school's office staff.

Commendably, a group of senior pupils is developing a very useful filmed resource to promote awareness of mental health and wellbeing. Once fully developed, teachers across the local authority primary schools will use this filmed resource as a central support to raising awareness around mental health with children. Senior pupils are developing this innovative resource as part of a Personal Development award.

Pupils' needs are rigorously assessed and planned for through a clear staged intervention model. This approach ensures young people and their families receive the support they require quickly Pupils' resilience and nurture needs are met through a highly effective nurture base and a Learning Zone that supports attendance, learning and attainment. Creative approaches to inclusion include 'Paws for Progress', 'Baking Back' and outdoor learning delivered by enhanced curriculum assistants. A range of programmes assist targeted groups in SIMD 1 and 2 or those who receive a free meal entitlement providing highly effective support in relation to attainment and aspirations to Higher Education. Where required, innovative and bespoke packages of support and appropriate learner journeys are tailored to individual pupil needs.

The impact of this work is demonstrated through data showing improved attendance, an important decrease in exclusions and improved attainment.

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.