

# Summarised inspection findings

**Hamilton Grammar School**

South Lanarkshire Council

3 October 2023

## Key contextual information

School name: Hamilton Grammar School  
Council: South Lanarkshire Council  
SEED number: 8524734  
Roll (Sep 2021): 1328

The headteacher is supported by six depute headteachers and two heads of year.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average and is an improving picture.

Exclusions are generally in line with the national average and is an improving picture.

In February 2022, 19 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2021, 28 per cent of pupils live in the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.

In September 2021, the school reported that 29 per cent of pupils had additional support needs. The school was disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 at the early stages of the pandemic before Virtual Hamilton Grammar was launched. There was considerable disruption to learning because of periods of remote learning in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19. Staff created the online 'Virtual Hamilton Grammar' for young people and their families. This supported continuity of learning during absence from school buildings. Staff successfully delivered online lessons for young people and monitored young people's wellbeing and participation. After the return to school buildings, COVID-19 caused high levels of staff and learner absence.

Hamilton Grammar provides provision for young people who have specialist additional support needs. Young people are offered places in this provision through the ASN placement process, managed by Inclusion Services.

There is no longer a school library because of the pressure for additional accommodation.

## 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 strong and supportive relationships between staff and learners ensure a nurturing environment across the school. The respectful and cordial daily interactions between staff and young people reflect the school's core vision and values. All staff are highly committed to ensuring the wellbeing and progress of young people. Young people in turn are appreciative of the care and encouragement from staff in supporting their learning.
- Most young people participate readily in their lessons and respond well to teacher instructions. They are clear about the purpose of their learning activities. Teachers support this in a variety of ways, including sharing planned learning at the start of lessons. We have asked teachers to reflect on the success criteria so that young people are clear on whether they have overtaken the learning outcomes effectively.
- In a minority of lessons tasks and activities are well matched to the needs and interests of young people and are appropriately challenging. In a minority of lessons, pupils are highly motivated by creative and well-crafted tasks and activities that provide relevant opportunities for young people to lead learning for themselves and others. However, this is not yet consistent across the school. In a few lessons, particularly in the broad general education (BGE), learning experiences are not well matched to learners' needs and young people become disengaged, leading to low-level disruption.
- The use of digital technology is a strong feature within the school. Ongoing professional learning throughout and since the pandemic has enabled staff to develop their own digital skills. Staff have embedded digital technology successfully in their practice and this supports and enhances learning. Teachers used these skills to deliver effective learning during periods of remote learning. Teachers' use of digital channels to share learning and feedback is supporting young people to take increasing responsibility for their learning. Staff also use digital technology effectively to facilitate communications and support mechanisms for learners and families.
- Staff have developed a helpful school framework to identify features of highly effective lessons. Staff use this common approach to planning learning in almost all lessons. However, young people's learning experiences are not yet of a consistently high enough quality across the school. Within the agreed framework, teachers should explore the key features of what high quality looks like and what is most effective for their learners.
- Young people do not yet have a clear understanding of skills such as creativity and problem-solving that they are developing across the curriculum. Senior leaders and faculty heads have well-developed and ambitious plans to embed a skills programme across the school.

- Teachers use a variety of assessment approaches to enable learners in the senior phase to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers are very confident in making assessment judgements in line with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) standards. A minority of teachers undertake duties with the SQA, which has strengthened understanding of national standards. Teachers undertake extensive moderation activity throughout the year. Further progress is required in the BGE to ensure a consistent understanding of standards using the National Benchmarks. This will support teachers to become more confident in making professional judgements about how young people are learning and progressing against national standards.
- At S1 to S3, staff should ensure they are confident that young people have gained the knowledge and skills from Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) before embarking on National Qualifications. There are a few examples where learners undertake units from National Qualifications in S3. Faculties should also work together to develop a consistent shared language about progress and achievement in the BGE. This will support young people to understand more fully how well they are progressing both through and across curricular areas.
- Almost all young people in the senior phase engage in learner conversations with their teachers to identify their strengths and next steps. Almost all young people in the senior phase can demonstrate knowledge of their working and target grades and how to improve.
- Most departments provide individualised feedback in the BGE and there is scope to develop this approach further to ensure all young people can self-assess to improve their learning.
- Faculties and departments have well developed approaches to monitoring and tracking young people's progress particularly in the senior phase. They use this information to plan learning for individual young people. Staff should consider further how they monitor the progress of particular groups of young people in their curriculum area, particularly in the BGE. For example, those young people who are care experienced or those who are affected by poverty. Staff have recently developed the Hamilton Grammar School Index. This index provides staff with access to a range of information relating to equity, progress and achievement, tracking data, standardised assessments, attendance and pupil support profiles. Teachers use this to inform planning which is contributing to meeting the needs of individual learners. The index has considerable potential to support the planning of targeted approaches to learning. This would support identified groups of young people to make the best possible progress from their prior levels of attainment.
- Staff should continue with their plans to reinstate activities paused by necessity during the pandemic. There is enthusiasm among staff for professional learning aimed at improving learning and teaching which meets the needs of all learners. Senior leaders and faculty heads are working well to improve the consistency of high-quality learning and teaching. All teachers are involved in collaborative professional enquiry and working on aspects of practice. Modelling of the most effective strategies, observations and learning rounds will enrich professional dialogue about the nature of high-quality learning and teaching. This will help support improved consistency in the use of differentiation, effective questioning, developing higher order thinking and the use of plenaries across the whole school.

## 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

#### Literacy and numeracy

##### Broad General Education (BGE)

- Senior leaders have a clear focus on improving attainment in both literacy and numeracy. Providing a wider range of pathways in mathematics, while at the early stages, has the potential to support this further. In numeracy, staff should focus on ensuring S1 to S3 provides young people with opportunities to achieve CfE third and fourth level experiences and outcomes more fully before moving on to National Qualifications.
- In 2022, according to data provided by the school, the majority of young people achieved CfE third level or better in literacy by the end of S3. Almost all young people achieved this in numeracy. A minority of young people achieved fourth level in literacy and almost all achieved this in numeracy. Staff should continue to develop approaches to assessing literacy and numeracy in the BGE that fully align to national expectations and standards. At present, professional judgements for achievement of a level are not yet reliable.

#### Senior phase

##### Literacy (leavers)

- Most young people left school with literacy at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better between 2016-17 and 2020-21. This is in line with the Virtual Comparator (VC). The majority of young people leave with literacy at SCQF level 6, this being significantly higher than the VC in 2020-21. Half of the S4 leavers in 2020-21 left with SCQF level 4 or better. This is significantly lower than the VC.

##### Numeracy (leavers)

- The majority of young people left school with numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better between 2017-18 and 2020-21. This is in line with the VC. A minority of young people left school with numeracy at SCQF level 6. Attainment at this level has been significantly higher than the VC in four of the past five years.

##### Literacy (cohorts)

- At S4, the majority of young people attain literacy at SCQF level 5 or better. This is in line with the VC. By S5, as a percentage of the S4 roll, the majority of young people attained literacy at SCQF level 6 in three of the last five years, which is in line with the VC. By S6, as a percentage of the S4 roll, the majority of young people attain literacy SCQF level 6, this being significantly higher than the VC in 2017-18 to 2019-20 and in line for 2020-21 and 2021-22.

## Numeracy (cohorts)

- At S4, a majority of young people attained numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better in four of the past five years, in line the VC. By S5, based on the S4 roll, a majority of young people attain numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better from 2017-18 to 2021-22. Attainment in 2019-20 and 2020-21 at this level was significantly lower than the VC. A minority of young people attained SCQF level 6 over the past five years which is in line with the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people attain numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better, this being significantly lower than the VC in 2021/22. A minority of young people attain numeracy at SCQF level 6.

## Attainment over time

### BGE

- Senior leaders should develop a strategic overview of how young people are attaining in S1 to S3. At present, senior leaders and staff do not have a sufficient understanding of young people's attainment outcomes to ensure appropriate progress is being made across all curricular areas in terms of CfE in the BGE. They should continue with plans to ensure there are more effective systems in place to monitor and track young people's attainment and progress through the BGE. Staff have correctly identified the need to develop further their BGE courses to better reflect national standards and meet the needs of all young people more fully. The school, with support from the local authority, were able to provide attainment over time across all curricular areas in relation to CfE levels.

## Senior phase

- Staff have a clear focus on meeting the individual needs of young people to support improvements in attainment. Very effective tracking and monitoring in the senior phase is allowing staff to make effective interventions to improve outcomes.
- Attainment has remained consistent between 2016-17 and 2020-21 using complementary tariff points. Staff have worked well to maintain levels of attainment despite the significant impact COVID-19 had on staffing across the school. The attainment of the lowest 20% of leavers and the highest 20% has been in line with the VC over the last five years. Attainment for the middle attaining 60% is significantly higher than the VC in 2016-17, 2018-19 and 2020-21.
- At S4, by S5 and by S6 (based on the S4 roll) attainment for the lowest 20%, middle 60%, highest 20% is largely in line with the VC using complementary tariff points.
- Staff have had a particular focus on improving experiences at S4. They have increased the range of courses and qualifications on offer. This, coupled with successful interventions, positive presentation policy and high aspirations for young people has led successfully to strong attainment. In S4, performance at SCQF level 4 or better is in line with the VC for 1 or more to 6 or more courses. For 5 or more to 7 or more awards, there has been an improvement over the five-year period. Most young people achieve at least one award at SCQF level 5C or better. A minority of young people achieve four or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. This is significantly higher than the VC in 2021-22. Performance at SCQF level 5A or better is in line with the VC over the five year period 2017/18 to 2021/22.
- By S5, performance at SCQF level 5C or better and SCQF level 6C or better is line with the VC over the last five years. The majority of young people attain one or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better. A minority achieve two or more awards.
- By S6, attainment levels require improvement. Senior leaders highlight the impact COVID-19 has had on this cohort and the challenges of different approaches to certification they have had over the last three years. As a result, attainment levels are not as high as in 2018, though attainment is in line with the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, a majority of young people attain one or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better in 2022. A minority attain five or more awards.



Both measures are in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieve an award at SCQF level 7C or better. From 2018 to 2021, attainment at this level was significantly much higher than the VC, though was in line for 2022.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievement**

- Young people enhance their skills and attributes through participating in a variety of activities and through taking additional achievement courses. The options include, the Duke of Edinburgh's award and many other courses accredited by a variety of bodies including the SQA, local colleges and the Open University. Young people in the specialist additional support needs provision have demonstrated successfully their commitment to citizenship by gaining nine Eco Green Flags for the school.
- The Joint Assessment Team advise and encourage a few young people to take a range of courses to develop their personal and social attributes. House staff also encourage a number of young people to take particular courses to build their confidence and skills. Learners take part in the 'developing the young workforce' (DYW) pathway. They are provided with insightful advice on which courses they should follow to enhance their skill profile.
- Young people in the senior phase are developing their leadership and interpersonal skills through their role as prefects and buddies. Young people are developing confidence and team building skills through their contributions to the wider local community through their achievements within the Youth Philanthropy Initiative Award. Young people benefit from the wide range of cultural, artistic, sporting and technology extra-curricular clubs, scheduled during lunchtime and after school.
- Young people are encouraged to reflect on and assess their skills profile. Most do this by writing a blog and posting it on a secure website managed by the school. Senior leaders are now considering how best to track the skills young people are developing across all aspects of their learning. This will support young people to recognise and apply the range of skills they are developing. This will also enable senior leaders to identify the young people who are not participating and thus provide all young people with opportunities to achieve more.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The school is committed to the principles of equity and inclusion. Staff such as the Equity Team and the Integrated Support team work closely with senior leaders to co-ordinate approaches and provide a wide range of interventions in areas such as numeracy, literacy and employability to meet the needs of individual young people. This includes young people affected by poverty, those with lower levels of attendance and those with a range of need. There is early evidence of a reduction in the numbers being excluded and an improvement in attendance.
- Targeted and well-considered interventions are having a positive impact on specific groups, including those affected by the poverty-related attainment gap. One example is in the senior phase, where a carefully designed approach to closing an identified gap between the predicted grades and the prelim results for young people resulted in raised attainment in the National Qualifications. This was achieved through a wide variety of interventions such as assertive mentoring, targeted study skills and supported study.
- Another strong example of interventions that are having a positive impact is evident in literacy programmes designed to improve the reading ages of a number of young people. These young people have been identified through the use of standardised assessments. Specialist staff provide intensive programmes of support which are enabling a few young people in S1 and S2 to access the curriculum more fully.



## Destinations

- Almost all young people leaving Hamilton Grammar School in the last five years have moved on to a sustained positive destination in line with the VC. Young people are well supported into a range of destinations through the work of school staff, partner agencies and business partners. This includes targeted support for the most vulnerable young people through DYW programmes such as 'Gradu8' and 'Top Up' programmes for university.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

Staff make effective use of Pupil Equity Funding to support young people and families who are affected by poverty. Led by the PT Equity, staff take account of the diverse needs of young people, especially those who face ongoing personal and economic challenges. Staff are proactive in providing young people with access to equipment and personal items. Senior and middle leaders take a sensitive and inclusive approach towards ensuring young people affected by poverty are able to access all activities offered through the school free of charge. This provides all young people easily available access to a full range of curriculum activities that support learning and wellbeing.

## 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.