Summarised inspection findings

Belmont Academy

South Ayrshire Council

18 February 2020

School name: Belmont Academy
Council: South Ayrshire Council
SEED number: 8235732
Roll (Sep 2018): 1221

Key contextual information

Belmont Academy is a non-denominational secondary school in the town of Ayr in South Ayrshire. The school has six associated primary schools. The headteacher has been in post for two and a half years and is supported by five depute headteachers.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average. Exclusions are generally in line with the national average and increased over the period 14/15 to 17/18, but decreased in 18/19.
In February 2019, 10 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.
In September 2018, 23 per cent of pupils live in 20 per cent most deprived datazones in Scotland.
In September 2018, the school reported that 19 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

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 headteacher has been in post for two and a half years. In that time she has led change very successfully and has created a positive ethos with increased expectations, standards and aspirations for all. She has worked very well with her senior leadership team to promote kindness and care and to develop leadership at all levels. The school has a clear focus on improving wellbeing, raising attainment and improving learners' experiences.

■ The vision, values and aims of the school have been in place since 2017. Young people, staff and the Parent Council were involved in the development of these. The values have been refreshed recently and this year the value of 'ambition' was added alongside 'respect and responsibility'. Almost all members of the school community demonstrate positively the school values. These, along with the pupil friendly motto for all young people to 'be kind, be positive, be yourself' underpin all aspects of the school's work. Senior leaders are at the early stages of a long term plan to review the vision, values and aims. They are keen to ensure an increased range of stakeholders is involved more fully in agreeing these.

■ Young people from SIMD data zones one to ten attend Belmont Academy. Senior leaders have helped ensure all staff have an understanding of the range of socio-economic factors that affect their young people. This includes sharing appropriate information, such as SIMD data and labour market intelligence. As a result, staff know their young people well and have a strong understanding of issues that affect them.

- The headteacher is supported very well by her depute headteachers. They have clear strategic and operational remits. They work well together to support and challenge each other. Together, the senior leadership team has developed successfully a culture of trust where almost all staff feel valued. As a result, staff are empowered to take on additional responsibilities and leadership opportunities. Senior leaders have managed the pace of change very well. They have been very successful in supporting staff to take forward school improvement priorities while maintaining a clear overview. A particular strength has been the work undertaken to improve young people's wellbeing. This is helping them learn effectively and attain well. Staff have worked very effectively with a range of partners to lead improvements for young people who experience barriers with their learning, such as care experienced young people. The implementation of 'The Belmont Way' is helping to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. As planned, a useful next step will be to evaluate fully the impact of the work on learning, teaching and assessment.

- The school improvement plan has four clear priorities agreed in conjunction with all staff and a range of other stakeholders including young people and a few parents. They are to raise overall attainment; improve health and wellbeing; ensure inclusion and equity are at the heart of the school's work and support learners to develop skills for life, learning and work. These well-considered priorities, which are based on the school's vision, values and aims, link directly to local and national priorities. As a result, staff are clear on what is important within the school and how they are contributing to these priorities. Senior leaders are aware of the need to ensure all young people, parents and partners are involved in school improvement.

- Senior leaders have linked closely the school's allocation of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to school improvement priorities. Senior leaders have used their allocation of PEF primarily to appoint staff to address identified equity gaps. This includes gaps in attainment and participation and supporting young people with family issues to be ready to learn. A number of the school's interventions funded through PEF are having a positive impact on targeted young people.

- All staff are involved in approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning at both a whole school and department level. Recent work to reduce bureaucracy has had a positive impact on improvement planning. Staff engage in meaningful and manageable activities to evaluate and improve the work of the school. All staff are involved positively in identifying improvement priorities and evaluating the work of their departments. They contribute to department improvement plans and standard and quality reports by engaging in a range of self-evaluation activities including data analysis and pupil participation surveys. The department improvement plans align closely to the school improvement plan while detailing clearly the priorities of each department. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to develop further all staff's approaches to measuring the impact of school improvement

- A major strength of the school's work is its approaches to empowering staff. Staff readily take on additional responsibility and leadership opportunities supported by well-planned professional learning opportunities. This includes supporting staff in Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) priorities. The aspiring middle and senior leader programmes are providing a useful vehicle for staff to develop leadership and mentoring skills. All teachers take responsibility for developing aspects of their department's work or whole school priorities. This includes a few teachers who have successfully led whole school developments. They are now supporting the development of colleagues in the school, in associated primary schools and across the local authority in wellbeing and learning, teaching and moderation approaches. For example, all staff have volunteered to be a member of a working group and a minority of staff undertake SQA duties. A few staff have received professional learning accreditation from the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) or have undertaken master's level study to

support the work of the school and their young people. A strong commitment to professional learning and the professional review process, underpinned by the GTCS standards, is supporting well career long professional learning opportunities for staff.

■ Partners contribute very well to the ethos and aims of the school. Most partners express a strong commitment to ensuring positive outcomes for young people, particularly in relation to employability and life skills. Young people facing additional challenges have their needs met well through the 'more choices, more chances' partnerships and Community Learning and Development. Several subject departments enjoy well-established relationships with partners linked to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), rural skills and charity work. Through the Subject Ambassador Programme, young people are leading learning in primary schools, for example, by supporting the delivery of transition events in social subjects and health and wellbeing. Whilst partners contribute to school improvement within individual departments, there is potential for them to have further involvement in whole school planning and self-evaluation.

■ Young people benefit from a wide range of leadership opportunities, such as taking on the role of School and House Ambassadors, dance leaders, sports leaders and leading aspects of the school show. The recently introduced comprehensive Ambassadors Programme helps young people develop important life skills whilst contributing to school improvement. The Ambassadors lead aspects of self-evaluation, for example, working together to evaluate the OUR relationships theme from How good is OUR school?. The Ambassador Improvement Plan, which is created by young people, links effectively with the school improvement plan. This is ensuring young people's views are taken into account when planning change. A few innovative programmes such as the Plan B Ambassadors and the Champions Board support young people to mentor others. Across the school, many young people are volunteering in some capacity.

■ Senior leaders are committed to embedding the national priorities of DYW, Career Education Standard (CES) and Work Placement Standard (WPS) into the school curriculum. They have communicated targets for implementation clearly within the School Improvement Plan. Individual departments have plans in place to support the implementation of these national initiatives. For example, the 'Belmont Skills Framework' is embedded into health and wellbeing lessons for all young people from S1 - S5. In addition, staff undertake gender analysis of uptake in subjects compared to national data and challenge gender stereotypes within careers.

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 values underpin the positive and nurturing ethos in which young people are motivated to learn. Almost all teachers believe that the values as well as the school's vision are reflected in their work. Learning is underpinned by young people's rights. Teachers know young people very well. Positive relationships exist between staff and young people in all areas of the school.

■ Almost all young people engage well with their learning and enjoy working in pairs and groups. Most young people are motivated, eager and active participants in their learning. Almost all young people are able to understand and talk about the skills they are developing through their learning. This is supported effectively by the 'Belmont Skills Framework'.

■ Most teachers share the purpose of learning with young people and what they need to do to be successful. Where this is most effective young people are given the opportunity to reflect and identify their own purpose of learning. This good practice should be shared with staff across the school to improve further the engagement of young people and give them increased ownership of their learning. Almost all teachers are using feedback well to help learners improve their learning. The majority of teachers use learner conversations to support young people to reflect on their progress.

■ In most lessons young people are receiving appropriate challenge. A few lessons are overly teacher directed and as a result, young people have limited opportunities to demonstrate independence in their learning. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is not well matched to their needs.

■ In most classes teachers give clear instructions to young people and use questioning well to help them understand their learning. In a few lessons teachers use questions that promote higher order thinking and deeper learning. This good practice should be shared more widely across the school. Teachers are developing consistency in learning and teaching across the school supported by the school's learning and teaching policy. This is helping them to structure lessons well and improve the learning environment. Teachers are also using a range of active learning strategies which are supporting improvements in the consistency and quality of learner experiences.

■ The majority of teachers are using digital technologies well to enhance their teaching. A few teachers are using digital technologies to enhance learning and motivate young people. Digital technology is also being used effectively to support young people's learning in the school library.

- Almost all teachers engage positively in professional learning that focuses on improving learning and teaching. This is beginning to result in more consistent well-planned activities that motivate, engage and meet the needs of learners.

- Teachers are planning learning and assessment using experiences and outcomes and National Benchmarks. This is supporting them to make better informed judgements about young people's progress in learning. All staff have taken part in assessment and moderation activities at departmental, school and local levels. This is supporting an increasingly shared understanding of standards and use of a greater range of assessment strategies within the Broad General Education (BGE). Teachers interact well with young people and are making effective use of assessment to inform interventions and agree next steps in learning. The reliability and validity of assessments and teacher judgements have been strengthened through this approach.

- In the senior phase teachers have a good understanding of expected standards in National Qualifications developed through departmental planning and moderation activities. They use their understanding to set aspirational targets with young people and plan learning and assessment that is supporting them to attain. Staff undertaking Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) roles strengthen this understanding through the sharing of national expectations with colleagues.

- Within the BGE, departments are using a variety of tracking and monitoring systems to determine how well young people are progressing. In a few departments they are using tracking information well to inform young people of their strengths and agree appropriate next steps in learning. The school is currently in the early stages of implementing a revised tracking system across all departments. This system has the potential to capture more consistently young people's progress in learning through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. The school is also piloting an enhanced BGE tracker to help teachers identify the progress of all young people, including identified cohorts, more effectively to provide bespoke interventions and continue to improve their outcomes.

- Within the senior phase a robust tracking and monitoring system is used well across departments to monitor young people's progress over time. Senior leaders and staff plan appropriate interventions and can identify clearly the progress young people are making in their learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ The school's vision is to establish a curriculum designed to provide appropriate, aspirational learning pathways for all young people. Consultation with all stakeholders has resulted in an ambitious revised curriculum framework.

■ Strong pastoral liaison between associate primary schools and Belmont Academy is in place and effectively supports the transition process from P7 - S1. The school is beginning to develop plans for curricular liaison. South Ayrshire Council frameworks are supporting well literacy and numeracy pathways. Senior leaders are aware of the need to extend processes to ensure progression in learning across all curriculum areas when young people move from primary to secondary school.

■ Young people in S1 - S3 study a BGE, based on national advice. Learning pathways are planned to provide progression, coherence, breadth and in most cases depth. Entering S3 young people select pathways in subjects from all curriculum areas. An audit of BGE provision illustrated that young people have an appropriately broad curriculum in S3. Senior leaders need, however, to ensure sufficient time is provided for young people in S3 to experience depth of learning in modern languages. In S3 PSE, young people reflect on their learning and aspirations. This supports them in making suitably-informed decisions regarding pathways in the senior phase.

■ Senior leaders have taken a clearly structured approach to developing a skills framework for learning life and work. Young people were involved in the design of this framework. In a number of subjects, teachers apply the skills framework effectively to support young people to understand the relevance of their work. Embedding these approaches across the school will be an important next step.

■ In the senior phase, young people study six subjects in S4. In S5 and S6, they choose five or six subjects or other contexts for learning. School leaders are currently planning a consultation exercise to consider the shape of the curriculum in S4. In recent years the school has successfully broadened the range of pathways open to young people in the senior phase. Increased personalisation of opportunities for study is available and the school timetable responds to the informed selections for study made by young people. As a result, an increased number of young people now stay on at school into the senior phase. The range of learning pathways supports young people in gaining positive leaver destinations and increased levels of attainment.

■ Belmont Academy is a SCQF Ambassador School. As well as a broad range of SQA qualifications, young people can study an increasingly large number of National Progression Awards. A broad range of wider achievement awards is supporting effectively pathways into employment, training and further education.

■ Learners in S4 and S6 do not receive their entitlement to religious and moral education. In physical education (PE), learners in S4 receive less than the recommended minimum time for physical activity. No core PE is provided in S5 and S6.

■ Partnerships between the school and other educational providers has enhanced senior phase pathways. Consortium arrangements with other schools provide a context for increasing opportunities for studying particular subjects when numbers choosing them are low.

- Additionally, young people in S4 - S6 are able to study a wide range of courses at different levels at Ayrshire College. Senior leaders need to ensure that these opportunities are appropriate and relevant meeting the needs of young people.

- Most departments in the school have established partnerships with a range of businesses and other partners that allow young people to benefit from contextualising their learning and developing employment-related skills. Staff in a few curriculum areas refer to potential careers and employment opportunities at regular points in their courses. Although at an early stage, the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Careers Adviser is working with staff to map the curriculum in the BGE to opportunities for young people to develop metaskills. The sharing of the school's skills framework with all partners should assist in ensuring a planned, cohesive approach to young people's progress.

- Senior and guidance middle leaders engage with partners well to support young people facing potential barriers to their learning. For example, a programme run by The Princes' Trust and funded by DYW has given young people the opportunity to experience and gain qualifications in diverse contexts. Other young people are benefitting from flexible timetable arrangements enabling them to attend extended work placements through the 'Work Out' programme.

- As part of the school's quality assurance procedures, all departments now analyse how different groups of young people perform and achieve. For example, analysis of performance in terms of gender, care experienced young people and those requiring additional support. Such reflections enable staff to review learning pathways to ensure they meet the needs of all learners.

- Staff are at the early stages of developing approaches to literacy and numeracy as a responsibility for all. Senior leaders are building on the local authority literacy and numeracy frameworks to develop further strategies to improve literacy and numeracy teaching and learning across the school. Staff responsible for leading literacy and numeracy are aware of the need to ensure they develop a shared understanding of literacy and numeracy across the school.

- The development of digital literacy for all young people is at an early stage. Young people develop a range of digital competences that enhance their capacity to learn and increase their employability. Teachers, supported well by library staff and the digital literacy group, participate in regular, tailored professional learning. This is giving teachers the confidence and awareness to widen how digital contexts can support engaging and active learning.

- Strong employer links are in place across curriculum areas. The development of curriculum and employability skills are being supported effectively by these employer links. Young people are benefitting from individualised approaches to help them gain a work placement throughout S4 - S6. Young people are benefitting well from the delivery of the requirements within the WPS and CES. Partners are having a positive impact on the design of the curriculum in a few areas of the school.

- The SDS careers adviser provides young people with support to develop their Career Management Skills (CMS) through the delivery of the School Partnership Agreement. This includes useful group-work sessions and one-to-one interviews providing informed choices about young people's next steps to learning or employment.

■ The school has a main DYW partnership with a local construction company, however it also engages with a number of employers across all curriculum areas. This offers extensive opportunities for pupils to gain useful work experience opportunities and develop their awareness of the world of work. Overall, young people feel well prepared and have a good awareness and understanding of routes to employment beyond school, local employment sectors and major employers.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Senior leaders identify parental engagement as a priority for school improvement. A staff working group is reviewing parental communication and organising events to strengthen links between home and school. Senior leaders regularly send information about the school's progress through newsletters, bulletins and letters. The majority of parents feel well-informed about events and their children's achievements.

■ A few parents want more regular, helpful feedback on their child's progress with learning and the opportunity at parents' evening to speak to teachers from all curriculum areas. A few parents feel tracking reports do not provide enough information to help families support young people with learning. School leaders seek the views of parents to support self-evaluation. School leaders need to consider how parents could contribute directly to planning and reviewing school improvement and support working groups taking forward priorities.

■ Senior and middle leaders organise family learning events. Previous events received positive feedback from participants. For example, a mental health evening which sought to raise awareness of wellbeing issues linked to anxiety, self-harm and cyberbullying. BGE and senior phase parents' evenings provide information on course options and delivery. A few parents believe more opportunities for parents and children to learn together in the school would be beneficial.

■ A few parents support the school by offering work experience placements for young people in local businesses and organisations. A few parents participate in the S5 mock interview event by interviewing young people and offering constructive feedback. This is helping young people to develop CMS and plan for post-school destinations. A few parent volunteers play a crucial role in the delivery of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award delivered in the school. This support from parents is allowing the school to present significant numbers of young people for the award.

■ The Parent Council is supportive of the work of the school and assists with fundraising, consultation and supporting events. It seeks to capture the views of all parents and make the Parent Council more representative of the school community. A minority of parents believe that Parent Council information needs to be shared more widely with the school community.

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

Wellbeing
- ■ Senior leaders and staff work very effectively to ensure that Belmont Academy provides a safe and caring environment in which young people achieve success. Almost all young people feel safe in the school. Most young people say they are treated fairly and with respect, and almost all report that the school helps them to understand and respect other people. Most young people say that staff know them well and that they have someone to go to if they feel worried or upset.

- ■ Almost all staff and partners have a clear understanding of the importance of wellbeing in raising young people's attainment and achievement. They use the wellbeing indicators effectively to influence their practice and help them to identify and address the needs of all young people. Teachers across the school understand their role and actively promote wellbeing as a responsibility of all. They provide effective personal support at the start of the day, where they reinforce the school's vision, values and high expectations for all young people. Young people are positive about the weekly themes which are addressed through personal support, such as wider achievement, literacy and kindness. Personal support is also used well to provide opportunities for young people to celebrate their successes and participate in charity work, such as 'Children in Need' and the 'three tin challenge'. This supports the building of very positive relationships, increases all young people's readiness to learn, and contributes to their understanding of rights and responsibilities.

- ■ Almost all young people continue to develop their understanding of wellbeing. In the BGE, young people use wellbeing webs effectively to reflect and comment on their progress in feeling safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included. Guidance staff use these webs to identify and assess young people's needs and plan appropriate interventions.

- ■ All teachers undertake a range of professional learning to improve their knowledge and understanding of young people's needs and barriers to success that young people may face. A few teachers have undertaken learning in mental health first aid, coaching young people to manage anxiety, building positive relationships, and dealing with change and loss. This has improved support for young people in coping with challenges which they face. Teachers across the school are also furthering their learning and contributing to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for young people by taking on additional leadership roles. Examples of these include the joint development and delivery of an enhanced wellbeing course for all young people in S2 and the 'creative confidence' work in English. These initiatives are supporting well young people's understanding of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

- The pastoral support team has developed a well-planned and progressive personal and social education programme. This is supported well by all partners. All young people across the school benefit from learning about issues which are relevant to them. This programme prioritises young people's awareness and understanding of relationships and sexual health, substance misuse and wellbeing. All young people also learn how to manage risk and how to make good life choices. Young people at the senior stages are developing effective interview skills and study skills. They are also developing important skills and attributes through community-based charity work and volunteering.

- Young people benefit from a wide range of opportunities to be active and take part in clubs and other activities that support their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. This includes the provision of physical activities for groups of young people who face particular barriers to their learning. Young people are very positive about the opportunities they have to engage in physical activity and the positive impact this has on their mental and physical health and wellbeing. Young people's participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is a strength of the school, helping to develop many skills, such as resilience, team-working and good communication.

- Staff prioritise positive mental health effectively through activities such as the school's mental health week. Whole-school activities such as the school show and charity fund-raising days also enable all young people, staff, parents and partners to work together to promote and develop improved wellbeing.

Fulfilment of statutory duties
- 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 and refer to recent guidance.

- The main duties under the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007 are being met. These relate to providing young people with access to free drinking water throughout the day and having processes in place to protect the identity of those young people entitled to a free school meal. The school needs to work more closely with catering service staff to promote the school meal service to parents and young people, particularly those entitled to a free school meal. Information provided regarding food, drink and nutritional standards shows that further work is required to meet fully all aspects of the requirements.

Inclusion and equality
- The school has a strong emphasis in the school on 'belonging' underpinned by a very positive and supportive climate and ethos for learning which is strengthened by respectful relationships and a shared commitment from young people and staff to understand diversity. An enthusiastic group of young people, supported appropriately by staff members, run a LGBTQ+ group in the school. Members of this group are proactive and find the mutual support that it offers to be invaluable.

- Almost all young people are included well in the life of the school through the wide range of leadership, sports and other activities the school provides for them. Young people are positive about the ways in which they are empowered to lead aspects of the school's work, for example through the roles of ambassadors and buddies. Senior leaders and staff go out of their way consistently to include and understand all young people. They provide personal, creative and flexible support to bolster young people's confidence and self-esteem and improve their experience of school on an ongoing basis.

- Young people who are care-experienced as well as those who experience a range of physical or mental health issues or bereavement or loss are also included very well. A wide range of out of class strategies and activities, led by their peers, staff and partners provide effective support for young people.

- A few young people are included very effectively in the school through their work with partners, such as the school counsellor, the campus police officer and the school wellbeing officer. These partners help young people and their families to feel well-supported and valued. They are also helping young people to develop self-esteem and achieve positive outcomes, including improved attendance. Staff and young people have designed creatively a number of 'safe spaces' throughout the school, such as The Hive and The Plan B Room. These well-used areas provide young people with alternative places to go at breaks and lunchtimes to seek advice from their peers and staff or to enjoy social or quiet time. Young people appreciate these areas greatly.

- The school has a comprehensive primary to secondary transition programme. This programme helps to lessen young people's anxiety about moving to secondary school. It also helps staff to identify and understand young people's needs and develop strategies to support them prior to their arrival at Belmont. An effective enhanced transition programme is in place for young people who require this.

- The needs of almost all young people are met very effectively by senior leaders, pupil support staff, guidance staff and staff throughout the school. A staged intervention model is in place to help staff identify and monitor young people's needs and to help them determine appropriate strategies to support young people's learning. Young people who present a variety of potential barriers to their learning, including young people who require additional support with their learning are benefitting from appropriate targeted interventions. These include flexible learning pathways to support young people to engage well with learning and to achieve success. The use of 'team around the child' meetings is ensuring that partners provide coordinated support as required. Whilst the school has appropriate support plans in place for young people who require them, staff need to review the plans more regularly and consistently to ensure that all interventions continue to be appropriate for, and have a positive effect on, young people over time. Almost all young people who require additional support with their learning attain and achieve very well, and secure positive destinations.

- Staff are supported well by effective sharing of information. This is helping them adapt their learning and teaching appropriately to meet these needs of all learners. Almost all young people are motivated by learning and teaching across the school.

- A few young people in S6 provide valuable peer support for vulnerable young people as part of their work towards achieving a mental health and wellbeing SCQF Level 5 award. The Cool Heads Peer Education programme is providing a few young people formerly in S3 with the opportunity to peer mentor young people in S1. Commendably, these young people have been shortlisted for the South Ayrshire Youth Forum Awards in the health and wellbeing category.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	good

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

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy
BGE

- From figures provided by the school, almost all young people achieved CfE third level or better in both literacy and numeracy between 2016 and 2019. The exceptions to this were in 2018, where most young people achieved third CfE level or better in writing and listening and talking. The percentage of young people achieving third CfE level literacy decreased between 2016 and 2018. The percentage of young people achieving literacy and numeracy at fourth CfE level by the end of S3 has fluctuated over the last four years. At fourth CfE level, most young people achieved reading and writing and the majority achieved listening and talking and numeracy in the 2019. Senior leaders acknowledge that teachers need to improve further the robustness and validity of their professional judgements.

- Senior leaders are placing an increased focus on supporting staff in delivering improvement planning actions to raise attainment. This is supporting effectively an understanding of moderation standards in the BGE. Senior leaders, data coaches and Assessment Moderation Facilitators are supporting staff well to develop further approaches to moderation. This includes continuing to develop the use of Scottish National Standardised Assessments and the National Benchmarks to support teacher judgement on achievement of CfE levels. Senior leaders, as planned, are developing further opportunities for teachers to take responsibility for developing literacy and numeracy across all contexts of learning.

Senior phase
Leavers

- Between 14/15 and 16/17 most leavers achieved literacy at SCQF Level 5 or better which was significantly higher than the virtual comparator (VC), attainment being in line with the VC in 17/18. Between 14/15 and 16/17 the percentage of young people leaving school achieving literacy at SCQF Level 6 improved. Strategies supporting this improvement include targeted support to improve young people's attainment in reading and an increased focus on ensuring that young people achieve the highest literacy award possible before leaving school.

- Attainment in numeracy at SCQF Level 5 or better has been in line with the VC between 13/14 and 17/18. The percentage of young people achieving SCQF Level 5 or better has decreased from most young people in 15/16 to the majority achieving this level in 17/18. Less than half of young people leaving school between 13/14 and 17/18 achieved numeracy at SCQF Level 6. Although this remains in line with the VC, senior leaders acknowledge that that there is the potential to increase the number of young people attaining at this level. Senior leaders are supporting teachers well to develop further approaches to assessment and use this data to

better inform next steps in learning. Teachers need to develop further planning of courses and raise aspirations in numeracy attainment.

■ In 17/18, the number of leavers from S4 and S5 was the highest in the five year period from 13/14 to 17/18. A few young people left school with no literacy and numeracy qualifications at SCQF Level 3 or better during this period. Senior leaders described some of the factors affecting the attainment of this group of young people, including fluctuating attendance rates, low expectations and course choice. The work of the Wellbeing Officer is having a positive impact on raising attainment and achievement for those young people facing barriers to their learning. A focus on providing leadership opportunities is helping to support raised aspirations. Also, the revised curriculum offer has the potential to offer more appropriate curriculum pathways for all young people.

■ The percentage of young people leaving school from S4 achieving literacy at SCQF Level 5 and numeracy at SCQF Level 5 or better is generally in line with the VC.

■ The percentage of young people leaving school from S5 achieving literacy at SCQF Level 5 or better improved between 13/14 and 16/17. Attainment for this measure was significantly higher or much higher than the VC in three of the five years between 13/14 and 17/18, falling in line with the VC in 17/18. At SCQF Level 6 literacy attainment is in line with the VC from 13/14 to 17/18. From 15/16 to 17/18 the percentage of young people leaving school from S5 achieving numeracy at SCQF Level 5 or better decreased. This was significantly lower than the VC in 17/18. The percentage of young people achieving numeracy at SCQF Level 6 or better is generally in line with the VC.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy in the senior phase as young people move through the school.

■ In S4, attainment in literacy at SCQF Level 5 or better has fluctuated from being significantly higher or much higher than the VC to being in line with the VC in the latest three years. By S5, in the latest two years, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF Level 5 or better has been in line with the VC from being significantly higher or much higher in 16/17 and 17/18. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF Level 6 is in line with the VC in the latest two years after being significantly higher and much higher in 15/16 and 16/17. By S6, between 14/15 and 18/19, attainment at SCQF Level 6 has been significantly higher than the VC in four out of five years, returning in line with the VC in the latest year.

■ By S5, between 14/15 and 18/19, the majority of young people achieved SCQF Level 5 or better which is in line with the VC in four out of five years and significantly higher in 15/16. By S6, attainment at SCQF Level 5 or better is significantly lower than the VC in 18/19 from being in line with the VC in the previous three years. Senior leaders, as planned, need to develop further approaches to identifying opportunities to improve numeracy outcomes for young people within the mathematics department and more widely across the school. Attainment at SCQF Level 6 is in line with the VC.

Attainment over time
BGE
■ The school is in the process of introducing a new tracking system which has the potential to allow staff to develop a greater understanding of the progress young people are making across all subject areas. At present, senior leaders cannot consistently evidence progress over time in the BGE in subject areas outside of literacy and numeracy. As planned senior leaders should develop further approaches to support teachers to analyse attainment and achievement over time for all courses and programmes offered in the BGE.

Senior phase

■ In S4, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people is significantly higher or much higher than the VC between 14/15 and 18/19 when compared using average complementary tariff points. The middle attaining 60% of young people have attained in line with the VC, with the exception of 14/15 and 15/16 where complementary tariff scores were significantly higher than the VC. The highest attaining 20% of young people are attaining in line with the VC.

■ By S5, based on the S5 roll, the attainment of young people from the lowest attaining 20% is in line with the VC with the exception of 15/16 and 16/17 where it was significantly higher than the VC. The attainment of the middle 60% of young people is in line with the VC with the exception of 15/16 where it was significantly higher than the VC. The highest attaining 20% of young people are attaining in line with the VC.

■ By S6, based on the S6 roll, the attainment of young people from the lowest attaining 20% is significantly higher than the VC in three of the last five years since 14/15 and in line with the VC in 18/19. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people is in line with the VC in 18/19 and significantly higher than the VC in the previous four years. Attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people in three of the past five years including the latest year is significantly higher or much higher than the VC. Complementary tariff scores for the highest attaining 20% of young people have fluctuated over the past five years. Senior leaders have worked well with young people, parents and partners to address these fluctuations by improving curriculum pathways and raising the aspirations of young people in S6.

Breadth and depth

■ Overall, attainment at S4, by S5 and by S6 at SCQF Level 5C or better and SCQF Level 6C or better for one to six or more courses is in line or significantly higher than the VC between 16/17 and 18/19. Senior leaders have identified a number of initiatives that have the potential to improve breadth and depth measures in the senior phase. These include developing and supporting a more stable staffing complement, improving curricular pathways and reviewing the school presentation policy. In addition, senior leaders have been developing well approaches to raising aspirations of young people and staff. This includes young people becoming involved in peer support through participation in the Cool Heads group and developing young people's aspirations through the Ambassadors initiative. Senior leaders are also introducing effectively an increasing range of college courses, foundation apprenticeships and national progression awards to support further appropriate pathways for all young people.

■ In S4, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF Level 4 or better between 14/15 and 18/9 is significantly higher or much higher than the VC for one or more to five or more courses. At SCQF Level 5C or better the percentage of young people attaining one to six or more courses from 16/17 to 18/19 is in generally line with the VC. At SCQF Level 5A or better the percentage of young people attaining one to six or more courses is generally in line with the VC between 14/15 and 18/19. However, the percentage of young people attaining one to four or more courses at this level decreased from 16/17 to 18/19.

■ By S5, in 15/16 and 16/17 the percentage of young people attaining one to seven or more courses at SCQF Level 5C or better was either in line, significantly higher or much higher than the VC. In 17/18 and 18/19 this decreased to be broadly in line with the VC with the exception of young people attaining one or more courses which was significantly higher than the VC. The percentage of young people attaining SCQF Level 5A or better for one to six or more courses is in line with the VC in 17/18 and 18/19. In the previous two years attainment for one or more to six or more courses has been in line or significantly higher than the VC. The percentage of

young people attaining SCQF Level 6C or better for one to five or more courses has either been in line or significantly higher than the VC between 14/15 and 15/16. Between 16/17 and the 18/19, attainment at SCQF Level 6C or better for one to five or more courses has decreased in to be in line with the VC. The lowest percentage of young people attained this level for one to three or more courses in the latest year.

- By S6, in 17/18, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF Level 5C or better was significantly higher than the VC for one or more to six or more courses. In 18/19, attainment at this level decreased to be in line with the VC for one or more and three to six or more courses. Attainment for young people achieving two or more courses remained significantly higher than the VC in 18/19. In 18/19, attainment at SCQF Level 5A or better is in line with the VC for one to six or more courses. This is a decrease in performance from 16/17 where attainment for one to six or more courses was significantly higher than the VC at this level. Overall, in 17/18 and 18/19 attainment at SCQF Level 6C or better and 6A or better has been in line with the VC for one to five or more courses. The exception being attainment at SCQF Level 6A or better for five or more courses which was significantly higher than the VC in 18/19.

- By S6, attainment at SCQF Level 7A or better and 7C or better for one to three or more courses has been in line or significantly higher than the VC from 16/17 to 18/19. Senior leaders are currently reviewing the SCQF Level 7 course provision on offer within the school and across the local authority to support young people's attainment at this level.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- The school offers a wide range of activities for young people to achieve and gain accreditation. These include clubs, trips, charity fundraising events and wider achievement courses. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is well-embedded with parental support contributing to its success. This is supporting young people to complete the award and demonstrate improved resilience and self-confidence. Young people understand how the award contributes to the life of the school and wider community. Active Schools staff work closely with the PE department to deliver a wide range of sports. Since 2017 there are notable increases in participation rates and those gaining Sports Leader awards. Young people use their experience of volunteering and working with others to gain Saltire and other youth awards. Senior leaders recognise that improving tracking of young people's achievement and skills development over time is an important next step.

- Almost all young people are developing important and progressive skills in leadership, communication and organisation through engagement in achievement opportunities. They can articulate the skills they have developed well. The Belmont Academy Skills Framework is supporting regular discussions about skills across the curriculum. This is leading to almost all young people being able to link learning to skills for learning, life and work.

- Staff have a strong focus on supporting care-experienced young people to achieve well. This reflects South Ayrshire's ambition for equity in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan. The appointment of the Care-Experienced lead teacher should enhance this further. Staff have worked very effectively in partnership with the Champions Board to support care experienced young people, This work has included developing valuable skills for learning, life and work and further supporting their positive mental and physical health and wellbeing. Care-experienced young people recognise improvements in their confidence and life skills and they are taking more responsibility for their learning. A few care-experienced young people gained recognition for their work by presenting a film at the Scottish Youth Film Festival.

- Most young people believe their achievements are celebrated by the school through assemblies, bulletins, prize giving and on social media. The school have introduced peer awards allowing young people to nominate others for demonstrating kindness and compassion. The S6 communication group is responsible for writing articles and linking with local media to promote young people's accomplishments. They also publish the 'Belmont Bee' newsletter each term which celebrates the success of young people and the school community. The young people involved benefit from this empowering responsibility and opportunity to demonstrate their enhanced leadership skills.

Equity for all learners
- Senior leaders have a clear focus on ensuring equity for all young people. Attendance has been consistently in line with the national averages for the years where figures are available. The school provided a figure of 90% for attendance in 18/19. The incidence of unauthorised absences has been increasing but is in line with the national average. Exclusions have also been in line with the national average for the years where data is available.

- The September 2018 SIMD distribution shows that approximately 23% of young people on the school roll live in deciles one and two, 41% in deciles three to eight and 36% in deciles nine and ten. Average complementary tariff scores for those young people living in decile one has increased from being significantly lower than the national tariff score in 14/15 to being in line with the national average in 17/18. Average complementary tariff scores for young people living in deciles nine and ten has been in line, significantly higher or much higher than the national average tariff score in each of the years between 13/14 and 17/18.

- Overall, young people with additional support needs leaving school are achieving well in literacy and numeracy. At SCQF Level 4 or better, almost all learners requiring additional support who left the school achieved a literacy award. The percentage of young people gaining literacy at SCQF Level 5 or better has increased between 13/14 and 16/17. A majority of young people requiring additional support who left school in 17/18 achieved numeracy at SCQF Level 4 or better. From 15/16 to 17/18 a minority of young people requiring additional support left school with numeracy at SCQF Level 5 or better.

- Staff work very well to support young people who face barriers to learning and achievement. Teachers have access to data about young people and this helps them to target appropriate interventions. Senior leaders provided evidence of the impact of a few of these interventions. For example, increasing the attendance of young people at risk of not attending school and improving outcomes for a targeted group of young people and their families. Senior leaders need to ensure that they can draw upon robust evidence to measure the impact of all pupil equity funded initiatives. Senior leaders track attainment by SIMD well and have provided evidence to support closing the attainment gap based on improvements in attendance. Senior leaders need to develop further approaches to measuring and addressing other aspects of the school poverty related attainment gap. For example, monitoring SCQF unit and course performance.

- Almost all young people who left school between 13/14 and 17/18 have moved on to a positive destination. This is above or in line with the VC, local authority and the national figure over the last three years. In 17/18, most young people left school for either higher education or further education and a few left to go into employment.

- School staff work well with the SDS careers adviser to ensure that all pupils receive Career Information and Guidance (CIAG) services. The SDS careers adviser provides both universal and tailored support to pupils based on need. The school benefits from the services of an SDS

careers adviser to support pupils who are hardest to reach or who have disengaged from school to progress to a positive destination. The careers adviser is available in school throughout the week and young people report that they feel well supported with this level of provision.

School empowerment

■ Empowering teachers and practitioners

■ See QI 1.3 for additional evidence.

■ To empower teachers, senior leaders have worked to develop a culture of trust and respect where staff feel valued. Staff are empowered to take decisions and lead aspects of school improvement. Senior leaders have ensured time is available at twilights and in-service days to enable staff to engage in a range of professional learning opportunities and to collaborate with each other. Senior leaders are supporting staff to reflect on the impact they are having as a result of professional learning.

■ Staff are engaging with relevant professional standards through approaches to professional review and development. Staff are taking increasing responsibility for self-directed learning including undertaking accredited courses at masters level. They engage in activities within the school and outwith including with local networks to develop their professional knowledge. This includes engaging with literature and research.

■ The ethos in the school is promoting a culture of collaboration. All staff volunteer for working groups, such as digital literacy, teaching and learning and BGE tracking. These are providing opportunities for staff to work together and to build positive relationships with colleagues and partners.

Practice worth sharing more widely

As part of the South Ayrshire Council School Inclusion partnership work with CELCIS (Centre of Excellence for Children's Care and Protection) at Strathclyde University, Belmont Academy is taking forward an innovative project to improve the experience and engagement of young people who have been care experienced. The project aims to support these young people to reduce disruptions to their learning, and raise their attainment and attendance. Staff use improvement science methodology as part of a wider range of approaches to evaluate the impact of the project.

In Belmont, the experiences and outcomes for young people living in and on the edges of care are improving as a result of in-house supports such as counselling and the work of the lead for care-experienced young people. Her role is to work with the senior leaders and Pastoral Support team to enhance support and to advocate for these young people. Highly effective partnership working with professionals such as the 'Champions' Board', which consists of previously care-experienced young people, is supporting care-experienced young people to develop valuable skills for learning, life and work and further supporting their positive mental and physical health and wellbeing. Young people feel empowered by the support that is in place for them and say that staff understand better their needs. They also report that their voice in the school has been strengthened. Young people have successfully negotiated the creation of a separate safe space which they have designed to meet their specific needs.

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.