

Summarised Inspection Findings

Balnacraig School

SEED No: 5381649

21 March 2017

1.3 LEADERSHIP OF CHANGE

good

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people. 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*
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- The school has a stated set of values of respect, integrity, compassion, honesty and fairness. The 2016-17 school improvement plan, updated in July 2016, is firmly based upon these values and is organised around four key areas: Develop Our People, Develop Our Business, Develop Our Model and Develop Our Relationships. The school would benefit from having a curriculum rationale based on agreed values. The improvement plan would benefit from being more widely available to the wider school community. It would further benefit from being produced in a more accessible version for stakeholders. The vision is aspirational for children and young people and is relevant to a provision for interrupted learners who have complex profiles. In themselves, the vision and aims do not ensure more positive outcomes for children and young people, but they are modeled daily by staff.
 - Children and young people feel safe and cared for in school and they are encouraged to achieve as well as possible. Staff know all children and young people very well and are aware of their individual circumstances. There is no specific focus on the poverty related attainment gap, but staff review young people's attainment on an individual basis and have an awareness of their needs. The school could do more to ensure that all children and young people attain and achieve to their full potential.
 - The headteacher, supported by the Chief Executive Officer, has worked hard to encourage leadership across the team. This has included appointing key teachers as the first point of contact for children and young people. The school set up a leadership forum in June 2016 which has produced a leadership development pack for staff, encouraging them to engage with a range of approaches and reflect on their own leadership skills. A Champions Group has been set up for staff pursuing specific areas of focus related to health and wellbeing such as sleep and transitions, although this group has not yet begun to meet on a regular basis. A range of professional learning opportunities have been offered over the past year including behaviour management training, as well as team-building sessions at Willowgate Trout Fishery focusing on developing therapeutic approaches. Whilst the school is becoming increasingly competent at identifying areas for improvement, and has begun to reflect on its practice using an exemplar toolkit of challenge questions, there is still work to be done for staff to become more confident using the updated quality indicators. The school would benefit further from being more outward looking in its work, collaborating even more closely with similar establishments to share practice. This should support further improvements in outcomes for children and young people.

- Projects are organised according to the school's priorities. Actions are identified with timescales and progress updates are reported. The school has a self-evaluation calendar which encompasses most activities including tracking and monitoring and reporting. More could be done by the school to ensure that all children and young people experience the highest quality learning and teaching. In a few classes, children and young people are not experiencing learning which is engaging, appropriate, challenging and progressive enough. Teachers do not always plan well enough for progression and the school would benefit from a more consistent approach. The school is increasingly collecting data about the attainment and achievement of children and young people. This data could be used more effectively to drive change that results in improved educational outcomes. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice and key teachers take responsibility for continually monitoring the progress of their caseload of learners' across the curriculum.
- Staff are regularly encouraged to reflect upon how well the school is meeting its aims for all children and young people. Most teachers in the school who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agree that they have been consulted on developing the school's vision and values and that they are actively involved in setting priorities to improve the school. The school should continue to develop its use of national advice and guidance for reviewing and auditing its work. Senior managers organise a range of high quality learning experiences for staff. The change management courses at Willowgate Fishery were particularly well received by staff. Parents are consulted regularly through a range of meetings relating to their child's progress. Partners feel that they are kept included and informed about the work of the school. In a few subjects children and young people are encouraged to evaluate their own learning at the end of each lesson. Children and young people would benefit from a more consistent approach across the school to evaluating their own learning.

2.3 LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experiences for 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*
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- Throughout the school there is a shared understanding of a values base which underpins the ethos of the school. There is an emphasis on positive relationships and the development of a supportive climate to enable children and young people to develop their confidence and resilience and to prepare them to be ready and engaged in learning. Staff know the pastoral needs of children and young people very well.
 - There is a nurturing environment in the school where children and young people have the opportunity to develop positive relationships with key adults. They interact well with staff and are beginning to do so with their peers. The school should continue to develop its nurturing approaches. Children and young people are benefitting from the individual attention given to them across school and care through a key worker system.
 - A few children and young people work independently on tasks supported by a high level of direct staff intervention. When learners attend classes they are well supported by staff to re-engage successfully if their behaviour becomes more challenging. The school should now review its approaches and interventions to improve attendance in lessons for all learners.
 - In most lessons the learning is staff led and there is a heavy reliance on textbooks and worksheets. The school recognises the need to develop more creative learning and teaching approaches. Professional learning opportunities for staff in pedagogy should now be progressed. In most lessons higher order questioning was limited in its purpose and effectiveness. Staff would benefit from developing their questioning skills to further promote curiosity, independence and confidence.
 - Children and young people access learning through personal interests such as super heroes, football, gardening and horse riding. At times, they are actively involved in choosing, planning and leading their own activities. Teachers and partners. The school should now ensure they build on these interests to develop skills of resilience, confidence and self-esteem. Children and young people enjoy their learning when they are challenged appropriately and lessons are well paced. For example, when dissecting plants using a variety of tools in science, and developing presentations in digital media studies. The school should now ensure that lessons build on prior learning and meet children's and young people's needs through learning experiences which are consistently well paced and appropriately challenging.

- The school has prioritised the development of children's and young people's learning in health and wellbeing through its effective therapeutic and nurturing approaches. In order to close the attainment gap, literacy and numeracy have been developed as core subjects and given additional focus. Supported by a wide range of partners such as Perth Academy, Perth College, Trellis, Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre and Willowgate, the school has ensured that children and young people experience a variety of curriculum options. The school should continue to provide more guidance on learning teaching and assessment and tracking learners' progress over time, to maximise the potential of children and young people. The omission of religious and moral education and modern languages in the curriculum is also narrowing opportunity.
- Children and young people are building their capacity to focus on tasks for an increasing length of time. They work individually and the school is at the early stages of developing collaborative approaches. They have a wide variety of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school through coffee mornings, fund raising events and open days.
- Working with partners the school provides meaningful, varied and frequent opportunities for community and outdoor learning within the school grounds and local community. This supports children and young people to develop their skills in meaningful real life contexts. Through these experiences they are developing their ability to work and empathise with others. The school is proud to demonstrate learners' achievements and awards a variety of certificates which children and young people like to receive. The school should now seek additional accreditation for these achievements where appropriate.
- The views of children and young people are sought and valued and the school acts upon their comments, for example, on planning the outdoor spaces. This is having a positive impact on their engagement in learning. The school should now consider developing approaches to children's and young people's rights' education.
- Staff frequently give appropriate verbal praise to children and young people. This is further developing their self-confidence and emotional resilience. Praise is also used in jotters along with a marking process. However, the school should continue to develop the use of annotation so that children and young people know what they have done well, what success looks like and how to improve their own work.
- The school is at the early stages of using Individualised Educational Programmes IEPs as the basis for planning learning linked to experiences and outcomes. The introduction of a strategic curriculum overview especially at the Broad General Education stage would enable the school to develop clear learning pathways for all children and young people and would ensure that planning builds on prior learning. This should include a stronger emphasis on skills for learning, life and work.
- Teachers are beginning to assess young people individually using a range of assessment data, including teachers' professional judgement, to inform weekly and monthly reports to parents and other professionals. As yet, however, these are not fully analysed by the senior team in order to inform teachers' planning. Assessments should be used consistently and meaningfully to track progress and for staff to understand what high quality learning looks like, and how effective teaching impacts positively on outcomes. This will ensure tracking and reporting on progress is robust,

evaluative and reliable.

- The school has identified the need for systems for moderating practice and understanding of standards. There is scope for this to be taken forward particularly with partner schools. Staff should be supported in the development of their understanding of shared standards in order to improve consistency across the school.

1.4 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF STAFF: theme 1

Governance framework

- The Board of Governors appointed a new chair in 2015 and continued to consolidate its transition from a trust to a limited company. The new constitution has introduced time limited tenures to ensure that Board membership is regularly refreshed. The Board comprises volunteers with different and complementary roles and responsibilities and a mandate to support the strategic work of the school. Members of the Board are tasked with a range of actions to drive school improvements. They are contributing to a new business strategy and improvement plan, improved service delivery and finance management.
- A new Chief Executive Officer was appointed in the last year. She has worked closely with the Board to implement improved procedures for staff recruitment including the involvement of young people in the process. She is developing well approaches to monitoring the school' performance which includes regular meetings with teaching staff to identify any areas for improvement.
- The effective partnership between the Board and the school should continue to be developed to take forward the vision for the future of Balnacraig residential school.

2.4 PERSONALISED SUPPORT: theme 2 Targeted Support

- Staff know children's and young people's needs well and are responsive to their personal circumstances. Barriers to learning such as social and emotional needs, low self-esteem, family circumstances, and poverty are tackled in a proactive manner to ensure they are mitigated. Overall, targeted support is embedded within the school and is having a positive impact on children and young people in terms of their engagement with learning, and personal and social development.
- Staff appreciate the importance of working closely in partnership with parents and partners in meeting the needs of children and young people with additional support. They are skilled at building positive relationships with all partners and fully involve them in decisions about learning and support. Parents and partners speak very positively about Balnacraig in terms of communication and collaborative working.
- Balnacraig's ambition is to develop a 24 hour curriculum developing Learning through Care approaches. This is leading to a more coherent approach across both the school and care settings to support children and young people in their learning. The school should continue to develop links between care and education to maximise children's opportunities.
- Staff are adept at planning tasks and activities which are built on children's and young people's interests and which help to develop their curiosity but there is scope to provide an appropriate level of challenge and enjoyment in refreshed content. Children and young people would benefit from more differentiated approaches to learning.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 ENSURING WELLBEING, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

good

This indicator reflects on the school's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their 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 each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- *Wellbeing*
- *Fulfilment of statutory duties*
- *Inclusion and equality*

- The school is improving outcomes for children and young people who attend the school by re-engaging them with education and deploying interventions to improve their attendance. Almost all children and young people have not been in regular education for a number of months before coming to Balnacraig School. The school is also working with the wider family and improving relationships between them and the child or young person. The school has been developing a therapeutic approach as an overall framework for its work. This is structured in four phases of transition: Welcome Me, Discover Me, Develop Me and Sustain Me. Whilst staff are engaged with this approach, it is still being developed. The school should re-consider whether or not this best meets the entitlement of children and young people to a broad, balanced and appropriately personalised curriculum.
- The school also has an effective key teacher and key worker approach. This ensures that children and young people are well known and that their progress across all aspects of life at school, including during the evening, is shared between those who work with them. Children and young people respond well to this and they are developing increasingly positive relationships with their key teacher and key workers.
- Staff understand the importance of promoting and ensuring the wellbeing of children and young people in the school. Staff also feel valued and supported as part of the school. There is a growing culture of teamwork amongst education and care staff. Partner agencies are very positive about the enthusiastic way that school staff engage with them and think that working in partnership is a significant strength of the school. This approach helps bring professionals in to the school to contribute to the learning experiences of children and young people. It also gives children and young people access to learning opportunities in the community such as the Fire Service course. It can also lead to a range of work placement opportunities, helping young people to develop their employability and work skills.
- The school is aware of and complies with many statutory requirements and codes of practice which it works within. This includes its approaches to child protection, physical intervention and the meeting of additional support needs.
- The school should ensure that it complies with national guidance regarding the length of the school week for pupils. The school should also ensure that it is following

health and safety guidance in relation to experiments.

- The school uses the GIRFEC approach appropriately in their approaches to integrated planning.
- All children and young people have an IEP. The IEP is drawn up and agreed amongst all teaching staff so that there is clarity of understanding. Nevertheless, IEPs do not yet give a clear enough picture of which aspects of education need to be individualised for each child and young person. They can appear to be a list of curricular targets which are not sufficiently personalised.
- No children or young people who attend the school have a coordinated support plan (CSP). The school should work with the authorities who have placed children and young people in Balnacraig to check whether any of them meet the criteria for a CSP.
- The school holds an effective weekly transitions meeting involving a range of professionals, including education and care staff. This meeting is for consideration of children and young people involved in changes and how they can best be supported.
- The school strives to ensure that inclusion and equality leads to improved outcomes for learners. Whilst most children and young people feel that the school encourages them to do their best, there is still significant potential for staff to be more insistent, consistent and persistent with high expectations for each child and young person in their learning.
- The school makes effective provision for children and young people who are looked after. Children and young people appear to be achieving and attaining better in school than they would have been in their previous education placement. The school is aware that it should be able to demonstrate this more effectively. A few young people are successfully involved in local secondary school placements which began with support from Balnacraig but are now managed by the secondary school. Successful transition planning is leading to opportunities for attendance at college link courses.
- Children and young people at the school can find change to established routines challenging. Staff are working with them to develop a more flexible approach which will improve their life skills and enhance their employability opportunities once they leave school.

3.2 RAISING ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

satisfactory

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 learner's achievement*
- *Equity for all learners*

- At the time of inspection, there are less than ten children and young people attending the school from P7 to S4. All young people have been attending the school for less than two years with a few joining after the summer. At the time of transfer to Balnacraig few of the referring schools were able to provide evidence of children's and young people's levels of attainment and achievement. Prior to entering the school, learners' attendance was very low and a few had stopped attending education altogether. On entry to the school, staff take time to build trusting relationships with children and young people whilst determining their levels of progress in key curricular areas. The school has introduced an electronic monitoring and tracking tool to improve its use of data and to record children's and young people's progress in developing the four capacities. The weekly reports show most children and young people are making appropriate progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff recognise that a next step would be the inclusion of teachers' judgements together with Curriculum for Excellence benchmarking in the tracking toolkit to provide a more robust overview of progress in literacy and numeracy. In a few cases, young people's attainment would improve by increased attendance at lessons.
- The young people in the senior phase are working towards SQA National qualifications in a range of curricular areas including home economics, Scottish history, mathematics and English. The number of young people at all stages has varied considerably over the last few years which has prevented the school from tracking attainment over time. The ASDAN expressive arts award at National 3 and 4 is a popular core component of the senior phase. Young people have developed skills for life beyond school by achieving employability and work experience qualifications.
- At the Broad General Education stage, the school was not able to provide reliable data on the number of children and young people achieving a level appropriate to their stage of development. We agreed with the teaching staff that the school should continue to develop its arrangements for moderation across Curriculum for Excellence levels to provide opportunities to share standards of achievements.
- At all stages of the school, children and young people are provided with interesting and varied opportunities to gain skills and develop attributes and competences beyond the classroom. Commendably, an important focus is on developing children's and young people's health and wellbeing through outdoor activities such as kayaking, cycling and fly fishing. The identifying and planning of skills gained would

help children and young people to know how they were progressing. A few young people are developing their leadership roles and digital and literacy skills very effectively by delivering a community presentation, “choices for life,” to police officers. Other learners have developed short movies in digital media and presented successfully at national conferences, for example, “shadowdrama” at a Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) event. All learners experience and develop enterprise skills through creating and selling items at the annual Christmas fair. The school recognises and celebrates children’s and young people’s achievements in a variety of ways including in the weekly reports, posters on the walls, the Balny newsletter and for the first time this year a well-received graduation/award ceremony. The school should explore ways to increase its use of nationally accredited award schemes to formally recognise children’s and young people’s achievements. The school should continue to keep under review the balance of time between core curricular areas and the promotion of health and wellbeing.

- Children and young people are engaged meaningfully in decision-making about their learning pathways and future career aspirations. They are aware of the importance of gaining qualifications and working hard on work placements. The school has successfully transitioned two young people back into local secondary schools and continue to support their placements.
- The school has well established personalised approaches to promoting equity of success and achievement for all. However, the school needs to review equity of opportunity across the curriculum.

SCHOOL CHOICE OF QI: 3.3 INCREASING CREATIVITY AND EMPLOYABILITY

- *Creativity skills*
- *Digital innovation*
- *Digital literacy*
- *Increasing employability skills*

- Partnerships are used effectively to deliver highly engaging creative learning. For example, young people have gained confidence in producing a variety of DVDs to share at conferences, in presentations in school and to the wider community notably a DVD on Bullying “Legal Highs” for the Web Project, “Homelessness for Perth” and Shadowplay. Through these partnerships young people are practically applying creativity as a higher order thinking skill.
- In the safe environment of the school and within trusting relationships some young people are exploring, synthesising and refining opinions available to them as part of imagining. They generate and define their ideas with guided support from staff which is leading some young people to invent new ideas for stories, film and animations.
- Most children and young people at Balnacraig are just beginning to be adaptable and flexible in their viewpoint and are only beginning to deal well with uncertainty. Some are able to hypothesise and are beginning to use divergent and lateral thinking.
- A few children and young people are developing their curiosity, recognising patterns in their learning and anomalies and making use of previous learning. Staff have still to recognise these as important creativity skills. Staff would benefit from further exploring what creativity means to children and young people at Balnacraig.
- Children and young people have the greatest success when they are supported to understand and define problems, craft, deliver and present solutions. For a few children and young people demonstrating initiative is supported and persistence is encouraged which is leading to increased resilience.
- Children and young people have good opportunities to develop creativity skills through the use of media and digital technology. They are able to transfer and apply their creativity skills well in new contexts, for example, designing a graffiti wall for display at a local art competition. They are able to make informed choices about the type of digital technology to be deployed including tablets, and movie cameras. Children’s and young people’s learning is enhanced by using their own interests to create digital solutions including superheroes and video game characters. The skills developed by children and young people are helpful in developing their own digital competencies for learning, life and work. The school should explore how it can encourage children and young people to be more skilled users of technology across all contexts of the curriculum.
- Young people benefit from opportunities to develop skills useful for the world of young adulthood. The school uses media events and practical subject areas such as cookery and art to develop employability skills. Young people in the senior

phase comment positively on their realistic work experience which is related to their intended career option. The school should, in collaboration with its partners, further develop the range of skills for work courses and enriched work placements available for young people.

- Young people benefit from an employability programme delivered by a local business partner. They develop a deeper understanding of possible career options through discussions with trained volunteers. They are then coached effectively in readiness for work skills.

PARTICULAR STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

- The inclusive nurturing approaches to supporting children and young people to re-engage with learning.
- Enhancing professional skills of their staff to meet more effectively the educational and wellbeing needs of children and young people. Children and young people are responding well to the developing roles of key worker and key teacher.
- Positive working relationships with parents and other partners helping learners to develop social and employability skills which support their communities and prepares them for life beyond school.
- The headteacher and Board of Directors working together well to encourage all staff to drive aspects of school improvement.

AGREED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT FOR THE SCHOOL

- The school should continue to develop approaches to learning, teaching and assessment to help all children and young people make appropriate progress.
- The school needs to develop further the process of monitoring and tracking children's and young people's learning and skills development in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- The school needs to develop further their curriculum to best support learners, to drive improvements in learning and teaching and promote greater consistency.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE INSPECTION?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Balnacraig School will inform parents and carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its school.