

Summarised inspection findings

Taylor High School

North Lanarkshire Council

21 January 2025

Key contextual information

School Name: Taylor High School
Council: North Lanarkshire Council
SEED number: 8519137
Roll October 2024: 1040 (capacity 964)

Taylor High School is a denominational secondary school, serving the communities of New Stevenson, Holytown, Carfin, Newarthill and Cleland.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

Exclusions are generally in line with the national average.

In September 2023, 15 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2023, 23 per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2023, the school reported that 19 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	good
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ learning and engagement■ quality of teaching■ effective use of assessment■ planning, tracking and monitoring	

- The headteacher provides effective leadership of improvements to learning, teaching and assessment across the school. Importantly, he has established an ethos where young people's sense of wellbeing is recognised as essential to supporting young people to learn, to achieve and to thrive. Staff across the school foster mutually respectful and positive relationships with young people. Young people's learning experiences are based on a very strong ethos, shared faith, and learning through CARE (Compassion, Ambition, Respect and Encouragement). As a result, young people learn in a calm and supportive learning environment.
- Most young people have a positive attitude towards learning. They are polite, articulate and eager to learn. They listen well to teacher instructions. Most young people feel confident to approach staff if they need support. In a minority of lessons, young people have well-considered opportunities to work independently and to lead aspects of their learning. This enhances their engagement and motivation for learning. Young people would benefit from more regular opportunities to lead learning across departments. At times, young people are too passive in their learning. A few teachers should provide more challenging tasks and activities more often and reduce time spent on note taking and copying tasks. Teachers should continue to develop their use of creative and relevant contexts for learning.

- Teachers have worked collaboratively to develop the 'Taylor High School Good Lesson'. This document outlines agreed expectations of learning and teaching. Most teachers apply the agreed structure for lessons and clear classroom routines are evident across the school. Teachers' use of this standard is resulting in improved consistency of learner experiences. Senior leaders should continue to develop opportunities for teachers to share good practice across the school.
- Most teachers use an appropriate starter activity during lessons to help young people make links to their prior learning. Teachers share routinely with young people the purpose of learning and what successful learning looks like. A majority of teachers use plenaries effectively at the end of the lesson to evaluate young people's progress in learning. Staff should now focus on improving the quality of success criteria. Too often, success focuses on completing tasks rather than on what young people are learning. A few teachers encourage young people to co-create their measures of success. This practice should be shared and adopted more widely.
- Almost all teachers provide clear explanations and instructions during lessons. In most lessons, teachers use questioning techniques well to check for learner understanding. In a few lessons, teachers extend their use of questioning skilfully to encourage young people to think deeply about their learning.
- Young people in the senior phase routinely access learning resources in school and from home via a digital platform. This helps them to revise and access helpful feedback from their teacher. A few young people who require additional support with their learning use individual digital devices well to support their learning in classes. A few teachers use digital technology creatively as a tool to engage learners. Senior leaders should continue to support all teachers to embed the use of digital technology as a regular feature.
- Almost all teachers are aware of the needs of young people. Support for Learning staff provide detailed information about young people's additional support needs through a helpful database. A few teachers meet the needs of all learners skilfully, offering appropriate support and challenge when required. Most teachers should continue to develop their approaches to differentiation to ensure all young people receive appropriate levels of support and challenge.
- Teachers use a range of effective strategies to assess the progress of young people. Senior leaders provide young people in the senior phase with a helpful assessment calendar, outlining when important summative assessments will take place. This helps young people and parents prepare for key assessments. Young people in the senior phase are supported by a majority of teachers to undertake peer and self-assessment tasks using Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) assessment frameworks. This helps young people apply National Qualification assessment criteria more confidently.
- Most teachers use formative assessment strategies appropriately during learning activities. They use 'show-me' boards and exit passes well to check for understanding. Teachers should continue to develop how they use information gathered from formative assessments to adapt their teaching and help inform their planning. This will help teachers recognise when young people need to revisit aspects of their learning or when they need further support to make progress in their learning.
- In the senior phase, most young people benefit from detailed written feedback after assessments and have regular learning conversations with their teachers. This helps them to understand their progress and next steps in learning. Most young people talk confidently about their targets and how they plan to achieve success. Teachers should develop this practice

further for young people in the broad general education (BGE) where most feedback is verbal. This will ensure all young people know clearly what they need to do to improve.

- A minority of teachers have valuable experience as SQA appointees. They support a shared understanding of national standards across the school. Almost all teachers engage in meaningful verification activities with staff from the school and across the local authority. This supports teachers to apply national standards in the senior phase successfully.
- Teachers in English and mathematics have undertaken helpful literacy and numeracy moderation of assessment standards with colleagues in school and outwith, including with their link primary schools. As a result, teacher professional judgements of young people's progress in literacy and numeracy are robust. In other curricular areas, most teachers are becoming increasingly confident when making assessment judgements in the BGE. Senior and middle leaders should extend opportunities for all teachers to moderate planning and assessments with colleagues beyond the school, as part of a well-planned calendar of activities.
- As a next step, teachers should continue to refine their approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment which is more consistently well-matched to the needs of all young people in the BGE.
- Teachers in departments regularly track and monitor the progress of young people. They now need to use that information to inform their planning of learning, teaching and assessment. This includes how teachers adopt strategies within their class to support young people consolidate learning or provide further levels of challenge for others.

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

- In September 2023, the school reported that 19% of pupils had additional support needs. However, senior leaders highlighted that there are a number of young people with an additional support need who were not entered correctly on the school's management information system. The school has stated that the percentage for 2024/25 is approximately 29% of young people requiring additional support.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

BGE

- In 2023/24 almost all young people achieved CfE third level or better in literacy, with most achieving third level or better in numeracy by the end of S3. A majority achieved CfE fourth level in literacy and numeracy in 2023/24 by the end of S3. There has been an increased focus on targeted approaches to reading and writing skills across the BGE. This approach is leading to a steady improvement in the percentage of young people who achieve at both CfE third and fourth level in reading and writing in 2023/24 by the end of S3.

Leavers

- Most young people who left school between 2018/19 and 2022/23 achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better in literacy. This is generally in line with the virtual comparator (VC). A majority of young people who left school achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy over the same period, in line with the VC.
- Most young people who required additional support and who left school from 2019/20 to 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy. A majority of young people who required additional support and left school achieved SCQF level 5 or better in the same period.
- The majority of young people who left school achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy between 2018/19 and 2022/23, with the exception of 2019/20, when most young people achieved at this level. This was significantly lower than the VC in 2020/21 and 2022/23 and significantly much lower in 2021/22. A minority of young people who left school from 2018/19 to 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy, in line with the VC. Senior leaders have effective strategies in place to further improve attainment in numeracy.
- Most young people who required additional support and who left school from 2019/20 to 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy. A minority of young people who required additional support and who left school achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in the same period. The exception is 2019/20 when a majority achieved SCQF level 5 or better.

Cohorts

Literacy

- At S4, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy from 2019/20 to 2023/24, with the exception of 2022/23, when most young people at S4 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. This improved from being significantly lower than the VC between 2019/20 and 2021/22 to in line with the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24. By S5, based on the S4 roll, a majority of young people in 2022/23 and 2023/24 achieved literacy at SCQF level 6. This is in line with the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24, an improvement from significantly below the VC in the previous two years. By S6, based on the S4 roll, a majority of young people achieved literacy at SCQF level 6 from 2019/20 to 2023/24, generally in line with the VC. By S5 and by S6, there is improved attainment at SCQF level 5 or better and SCQF level 6 over recent years.

Numeracy

- At S4, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better from 2021/22 to 2023/24. This improved from significantly lower than the VC in 2020/21 to in line with the VC in 2022/22 to 2023/24. By S5 and S6, based on the S4 roll, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 from 2019/20-2023/24, in line with the VC.

English and mathematics

- In English and mathematics there has been a notable increase in the number of successful presentations at A-C to above the national pass rate for National 5 at S4 and by S5, and Higher by S5 in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This reflects the ambitious presentations policy, supported by increased use of data, to support a wide range of interventions such as the Easter school and maths camp.

Attainment over time

BGE

- By the end of S3 in most subjects other than in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics, most young people are achieving CfE third level or better and the majority of young people are achieving CfE fourth level. Senior leaders track carefully young people's attainment over time in all curricular areas through a detailed whole school tracking system. Staff use this effectively to explore attainment over time of all young people, including those who may suffer from the impact of poverty. Senior leaders support and challenge faculty heads appropriately as they evaluate the progress young people make over time. This work is at early stages but is already showing the positive impact of specific interventions in young people's attainment in the BGE.

Senior phase

Leavers

- Attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of young people using average complementary tariff points is generally in line with VC between 2018/19 and 2022/23. The exception is 2021/22, when attainment was significantly lower than the VC. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people and highest attaining 20% of young people who left school between 2018/19 and 2022/23 is significantly lower than the VC. The exception is 2019/20, when attainment was in line.

Cohorts

- At S4, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people, middle attaining 60% of young people and highest 20% of young people is generally in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2023/24, using average complementary tariff points. By S5, based on the S4 roll, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people and the highest attaining 20% of young people from 2019/20 to 2023/24 is in line with the VC. For the middle attaining 60% of young

people in 2020/21 and 2021/22 attainment was significantly lower than the VC. This has improved to be in line with the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24. By S6, based on the S4 roll, attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people and the middle attaining 60% of young people is generally in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2023/24. The attainment of the highest 20% of young people has improved in 2023/24 to in line with the VC, from being significantly lower than the VC in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Breadth and depth

- Staff have a clear focus on meeting the individual needs of young people to support improvements in attainment. Effective tracking and monitoring in the senior phase supports staff to plan targeted interventions for young people not on track and improve outcomes for young people, including those who require additional support. These interventions include use of relative values to identify underachievement, subject-specific 'Future Friday' supported study classes and 'at risk' intensive support where required. Senior leaders have taken effective action to address the percentage of young people who are dual presented at S4 for both National 4 and National 5 courses. In 2023/24, nearly a quarter of young people were dual presented at S4 for both National 4 and National 5 courses, particularly in mathematics. Senior and middle leaders are addressing this through more appropriate coursing and presentation levels for young people.
- At S4, a minority of young people achieved six or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. This was significantly higher than the VC in 2022/23. By S5 and by S6 young people achieved four or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better, generally in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better. By S6, a few young people achieved one or more award at SCQF level 7C or better, improving from significantly lower than the VC in 2021/22 and 2022/23 to in line with the VC in 2023/24.
- Senior leaders are at the early stages of reviewing the curriculum. As an interim measure, they have increased the range of courses and awards available in different curriculum areas, such as practical electronics, business skills and religious belief and values. These courses provide young people with more opportunities to achieve at SCQF levels 4-6 and support them to develop a wider range of skills. Senior leaders are clear that they need to use the full SCQF framework to build progression pathways, as well as increase the choice of qualifications.
- Young people in S4 are presented for a significantly higher number of SCQF qualifications than the national average. Although young people do well in National Qualifications, it is important for senior leaders to identify the value added by additional courses to young people's attainment, learner pathways and experiences. In the latest year, 2023/24, 84% of young people were presented for eight or more courses yet very few achieved all these at SCQF level 5 or better.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- An increasing number of young people access expressive arts and sport activities through the Future Friday initiative. Young people are proud to represent their school at competitive events and performances. These activities have a positive impact on young people's wellbeing and allow them to develop their confidence, communication and team working skills. In a few examples, staff use data effectively to direct young people to activities that allow them to experience success through more skills based approaches. Most young people are well supported by strong partnerships with local groups and organisations. Staff recognise and celebrate young people's achievement in a range of ways. This helps young people feel respected and that their achievements are valued. Young people and staff are committed to faith-based activities and community programmes. As a result, most young people have a strong sense of connection to their school and local community.

- A majority of young people in the senior phase develop leadership skills through a range of ambassadorial or formal leadership roles. They are peer tutors, school captains and ambassadors across a range of areas such as STEM and sports coaching. Young people enjoy the responsibility of these roles and feel empowered to make a positive difference in their school community. The leadership skills of young people could be better enhanced through greater involvement in school improvement activity. The school are addressing this through their approach to improving pupil participation, voice and leadership. A few young people are working towards leadership qualifications at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6. Senior leaders should explore accreditation of achievements for a greater number of young people. In the BGE, a few young people develop leadership skills through the pupil council and in junior house roles.
- Staff track young people's participation in the wide range of achievements in a few areas of the curriculum. Senior leaders should now, as planned, develop a strategic overview of young people's achievements. This will enable staff to recognise more effectively the achievements of young people who take part and identify and address any barriers for those who do not. Senior leaders should also consider how best to support young people to recognise and articulate the skills they are developing through their participation in wider achievement and leadership activities.

Equity for all learners

- Almost all staff have a strong understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school. Staff show a good understanding of how to remove costs associated with school day and place an appropriate focus on reducing the poverty-related attainment gap. Senior leaders have created a clear, sustainable plan in place for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The PEF funded staff team work well together to target interventions for young people in S1 and S2, identified through transition attainment data and standardised assessments. These interventions are having a significant positive impact on accelerating the progress of these learners.
- Staff have recently developed a mentoring programme which is at an early stage of supporting identified S3-6 learners to maximise their attainment. Senior leaders need to monitor carefully the impact of this work to ensure it is improving outcomes for these young people. There have been improvements in the average complementary tariff points for young people who left school in 2022/23 and who live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles one and two. However, their attainment is still lower when compared to young people who live in similar deciles across Scotland.
- Staff use increasingly robust approaches to monitor young people's attendance. A few young people have improved their attendance through engaging with out-of-school supports, digital learning and a range of partnerships which help them to reengage in learning. The PEF-funded school provision, Joe's Space, also supports young people and families to address barriers to learning and engagement with education.
- Almost all young people stay on at school beyond S4, with the majority continuing to the end of S6. Staff work effectively with a range of partners such as Skills Development Scotland, local employers, colleges and universities to support young people when they leave school. Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, almost all young people entered a positive destination on leaving school. However, in the latest year 2022/23 this was significantly lower than the VC.

Other relevant evidence

- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

Practice worth sharing more widely

The headteacher, supported ably by senior leaders, has developed very effective strategic approaches to safeguarding and child protection. He is committed to improving young people's sense of safety and is transparent about the steps taken to make improvements. Young people's sense of safety is a prominent aspect of the school improvement plan. Young people play a vital role in making improvements in this area. Staff seek their views to identify, implement and refine approaches to ensuring their safety at school. Young people are leading on the development of a toilet policy which reflects challenges that the school community is working together to address. Staff have also worked effectively with partners to address young people's concerns. They gather data to demonstrate improvements in this area over time.

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.