

# Summarised inspection findings

**Perth Grammar School**

Perth and Kinross Council

28 January 2020

School name: Perth Grammar School  
Council: Perth and Kinross Council  
SEED number: 5350832  
Roll (Nov 2019): 904

## Key contextual information

Attendance is generally in line with the national average for years where comparable figures are available. However, attendance has fallen in recent years to 89.0 per cent for 2017 – 2018 and 89.1 per cent for 2018 – 19. Exclusions are generally above the national average and have increased over the five year period from 2014 – 15 to 2018 – 19. In February 2019, 12.5 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals. In September 2018, 10.7 per cent of pupils lived in the 20 per cent most deprived datazones in Scotland. In September 2018, the school reported that 43 per cent of pupils had additional support needs (ASN).

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**satisfactory**

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's approaches to learning and teaching are framed by values of pride, respect and ambition. Most relationships are positive and respectful across the school and based on a rights respecting context. The majority of young people enjoy learning at school. They are motivated and engaged when tasks are well-matched to their needs. However, a few young people are disrupting the learning of others. Teachers need to ensure that all young people's individual learning needs are met. A focus on appropriate pace and challenge for all young people should improve learner engagement and attainment outcomes.
- The majority of lessons are too teacher directed resulting in young people who are often passive participants in their learning. On a few occasions, young people lead aspects of their learning. When young people have the opportunity to work in pairs and groups, they work well together. They are more engaged in their learning when they have such opportunities. Learners should be more fully involved in planning and leading their learning, including more independent and collaborative working with their peers.
- In most lessons, teachers provide clear instructions and explanations. Most teachers share the purpose of the lesson and what successful learning looks like. Teachers should continue to develop these approaches further to support young people's learning. In the majority of lessons, teachers use questioning appropriately to determine learners' understanding. Teachers now need to use questioning more effectively to develop young people's higher order thinking skills. The majority of teachers provide effective feedback to support young people with their learning. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to focus on all staff providing high quality feedback to young people.

- A few teachers use digital technology well to support young people's learning. A leading learning group of digital leaders is well-placed to support staff to develop further their digital skills to enhance learning experiences for young people. Senior leaders have identified the need to improve the use of digital technologies across the school.
- Senior leaders have provided a range of professional learning activities to support the development of effective learning and teaching. Staff should develop a shared understanding of what good learning and teaching looks like. This shared understanding has the potential to support the development of high-quality learning and teaching across all curricular areas and increase expectations.
- Staff use a range of assessments to support young people's progress in the broad general education (BGE). The use of experiences and outcomes to plan learning experiences is inconsistent across all curriculum areas. Teachers would benefit from drawing a clearer distinction between experiences and outcomes and the use of National Benchmarks to assess progress. This should help provide clarity for learners and support improvements in teachers' professional judgements. Senior and middle leaders should now ensure that all teachers have regular opportunities to agree higher standards for learning, teaching and assessment through planned moderation activities.
- In the senior phase, progress is tracked using assessments that are linked to National Qualifications (NQs). A minority of teachers share their experience of national standards well from their roles as markers and examiners with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Others attend events to maintain their knowledge of assessment arrangements. These professional learning opportunities are helping staff develop a clearer understanding of the standards required in these qualifications.
- Currently, most faculties and departments use their own tracking procedures. In a few departments, these are providing an effective means to monitor the progress of young people as they move through the BGE. Moving forward, teachers are piloting a tracking and monitoring tool. This has the potential to provide a consistent approach across all curricular areas and improve tracking, monitoring and reporting in the BGE. To support young people further, staff should improve their analysis of gathered data to implement timely interventions as they progress in their learning.
- In the senior phase, tracking and monitoring is more robust. The majority of young people in the senior phase are aware of their target grades and their current working grades. Most young people need to develop further their confidence in explaining how to improve their progress. Senior leaders should continue to work with staff to review and improve approaches to learning conversations. These should focus on learners' understanding of their progress and attainment and include setting aspirational targets for their ongoing progress.

## 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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

### 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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

- Senior leaders provided achievement of a level figures for young people at the school. They acknowledge that these are not yet fully reliable. From these figures, most young people achieved third Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level or better in both literacy and numeracy between 2016 and 2019. Less than half of young people achieved fourth CfE level by S3 in literacy and numeracy. Staff now need to ensure professional judgements are built on robust assessment evidence which takes into account national guidance.
- Staff have access to a range of data to support their professional judgements, including Scottish National Standardised Assessments. They engage in limited moderation activities in school and outwith to support professional judgements in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders acknowledge that the quality of these activities is not sufficiently robust. Staff would benefit from working further with colleagues outwith the school on moderation of standards. This should support staff to ensure the reliability of their professional judgements.

#### Senior phase

##### Leavers

- Most young people leaving school between 2014 and 2018 achieved literacy at SCQF level 5 or better in three out of the five years. The percentage of young people achieving at this level moved from being significantly lower than the virtual comparator (VC) in 2016 to significantly much higher in 2018. Overall, less than half of young people leaving school in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018 achieved literacy at SCQF level 6. Just over half achieved this in 2017. Attainment at this level is in line with the VC.
- The majority of young people leaving school between 2014 and 2018 achieved numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better. Less than half of young people leaving school between 2014 and 2018 achieved numeracy at SCQF level 6. The percentage of young people achieving numeracy at SCQF level 6 declined between 2015 and 2018. Overall, the numeracy attainment of leavers at SCQF level 5 or better and level 6 has been in line with the VC or significantly higher between 2014 and 2018.
- The majority of young people leaving school from S4 in 2018 achieved literacy at SCQF level 5 or better. This is an improvement on previous years and is now significantly higher than the VC. Less than half left with numeracy at this level. This is in line with the VC.
- Most young people leaving school from S5 in 2018 achieved literacy at SCQF level 5 or better. This is an improvement from the majority of young people in 2017 and less than half of young people in 2016. Attainment at the level is now significantly higher than the VC. Attainment at

SCQF level 6 in literacy and SCQF level 5 or better and level 6 in numeracy is, overall, in line with the VC.

- A few young people are leaving school with no literacy or numeracy qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better. Senior leaders are taking steps to address this moving forward.

### **Cohorts**

- In S4, the percentage of young people achieving SCQF level 5 or better in literacy improved between 2015 and 2019. Most young people achieved literacy at SCQF level 5 or better between 2017 and 2019, this being significantly higher than the VC. The percentage of young people achieving SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy improved between 2015 and 2019. The majority achieved numeracy at this level.
- Overall, by S5 and S6, the percentage of young people achieving literacy or numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better or level 6 is in line with the VC. The percentage of young people achieving literacy at SCQF level 5 by S5 in 2018 and by S6 in 2019 is significantly higher than the VC. By S5, in 2019 the percentage of young people achieving SCQF level 6 in literacy is significantly lower than the VC after a decline from 2018.

### **Attainment over time**

#### **BGE**

- Senior leaders do not have a clear understanding of young people's attainment in the BGE. They cannot currently evidence progress over time in the BGE across curriculum areas outside literacy and numeracy. Staff are at the early stages of implementing a new tracking system which has the potential to allow them to develop a greater understanding of the progress young people are making across all curricular areas. To support staff in making informed judgements, greater focus on monitoring and tracking attainment and progress in the BGE is required.

### **Senior phase**

- The attainment of all leavers has been in line with the VC between 2014 and 2018 when compared using average total tariff points. The attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of leavers has fluctuated between 2014 and 2018, showing no clear pattern of improvement. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% was significantly lower than the VC in 2018.
- In S4, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people has decreased between 2015 and 2019 when compared using average complementary tariff scores. It has moved from in line with the VC from 2015 to 2018 to significantly lower than the VC in 2019. The middle attaining 60% have attained in line with the VC, with the exception of 2018 where it was significantly lower than the VC. The highest attaining 20% are attaining in line with the VC.
- By S5, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% and highest attaining 20% of young people is in line with the VC when measured using average complimentary tariff scores. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% has decreased between 2016 and 2019 and is significantly lower than the VC for 2018 and 2019 when measured using average complementary tariff scores.
- By S6, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people was overall in line with the VC. In 2015, attainment was significantly higher than the VC for the highest attaining 20% of young people. It was significantly lower than the VC in 2019 for the middle attaining 60% of young people.



## Breadth and depth

- The school has indicated that a number of factors have had an impact on breadth and depth measures. These include staffing, lack of rigour in the BGE and previous presentation policies in the senior phase. In addition, the presentation rates, which are significantly lower than the national average in a number of subject departments, are contributing to a decline in breadth and depth measures in the most recent years. To help to address this, senior leaders have established regular departmental attainment reviews with staff. These include action points to raise attainment. It is too early to say if these will have the desired impact and raise attainment. The majority of young people in S4 have been presented for six qualifications over the past three years. Senior leaders are also introducing an increasing range of college courses, foundation apprenticeships and national progression awards.
- In 2019, in S4, by S5 and by S6, the majority of young people attained three or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better. By S5 and by S6, a minority of young people attained one or more to four or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better.
- In S4, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 4 or better between 2015 and 2019 is in line or significantly higher than the VC for one or more to six or more courses. At SCQF level 5C or better the percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more courses from 2015 to 2017 is in line with the VC. The percentage of young people attaining one or more to three or more and five or more to six or more courses has fallen in 2018 to be significantly lower than the VC. Attainment at this level recovered somewhat in 2019 and is now in line with the VC for one or more to three or more courses. It is still significantly lower for five or more to six or more courses. Similarly, at SCQF level 5A or better the percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more courses was broadly in line with the VC between 2015 and 2018. However, between 2015 and 2019 the percentage of young people attaining at this level has fallen. In 2019, it is significantly lower than the VC for three or more to six or more courses.
- By S5, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5C or better, level 5A or better and level 6C or better was broadly in line with the VC between 2015 and 2017. The percentage of young people attaining at each level has decreased since 2017. In 2019 the percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better, level 5A or better and one or more to three or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better is either significantly lower or much lower than the VC. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 6A or better is broadly in line with the VC for 2015 to 2019. The percentage of young people entered for five SQA courses at S5 declined from 48% in 2017 to 22% in 2019.
- By S6, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to two or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better has improved from 2017 to 2019. Overall, it is in line with the VC between 2015 and 2019. However, the percentage of young people attaining three or more to six or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better, one or more to five or more courses at SCQF level 5A or better and one or more to four or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better has decreased from 2017 to 2019. The percentage of young people attaining at these levels in 2019 is significantly lower or much lower for these measures. The percentage of young people attaining one or more to two or more courses at SCQF level 7C or better and level 7A between 2015 and 2019 has decreased from 2017 to 2019. Attainment at this level is, overall, in line with the VC.

## Overall quality of learners' achievement

- The majority of young people are demonstrating improved confidence, communication and teamwork skills through involvement in achievement opportunities. A range of clubs, activities and educational visits are offered, for example, in performing arts and sport. A minority of

young people have been able to demonstrate leadership skills by adopting ambassador roles. Initiatives such as values based learning groups, mentors in violence prevention and mental health ambassadors are encouraging a culture of respect and positive relationships. Most young people are able to demonstrate that they are responsible citizens through involvement in charity work. The successful 5K charity fun run and The Youth Philanthropy Initiative are strong examples of learners making a positive contribution to support local causes. The recently established #Article 12 group is seeking to promote the role of learners in shaping change and school improvement. The school will need to measure the impact of this initiative in terms of empowering young people to contribute to improvement.

- Senior leaders are working in collaboration with their associated primary schools to develop a progressive skills framework based on the local authority model. This is beginning to support young people in developing their language and understanding of skills. The majority of young people are not yet able to articulate how achievements are supporting their skills development over time. Senior leaders should consider how to support this, particularly through the BGE wider achievement courses. Staff should ensure achievements are tracked and monitored for all learners. Young people would benefit from more opportunities to receive accreditation for achievements to recognise their successful outcomes.
- Most young people feel included in the school community by approaches to celebrating achievements such as through social media, assemblies, newsletters and prize giving. By increasing recognition of young people's out-of-school achievements, a few young people would feel more valued by the school. The school works with a range of partners to support achievements. These partnerships make a positive contribution and enhance learning opportunities for the majority of young people. The school has effective partnerships with various organisations including local employers. A strategic partnership with a local employer is leading to the joint delivery of a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) project for all S1 learners. This is helping young people make valuable connections in their learning across these areas.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Important weaknesses exist in the school's approach to ensuring equity for all learners. Insufficient analysis of attainment data for young people who have a barrier to learning has taken place. As a result, senior leaders are not currently able to identify gaps in attainment. Approaches that are more rigorous are required to support staff to identify gaps in attainment and subsequently use appropriate interventions to improve outcomes for young people. These need to be monitored closely to ensure they have the desired impact. Senior leaders have used their allocation of pupil equity funding for a number of interventions targeted at specific young people. Senior leaders cannot yet identify the impact of these interventions and how they are improving outcomes or closing a poverty related attainment gap.
- Attendance has been in line with the national average for the years where figures are available. The school provided attendance figures for 2017 – 18, 89.0%, and 2018 – 19, 89.1%, these show a decrease on previous years. The incidents of unauthorised absences has been increasing year on year since 2014 – 2015. The leadership team have a clear picture of why young people are not attending school and are taking action to address this. Staff should continue to develop a range of interventions to ensure that young people who are not attending school regularly do so. The number of exclusions is consistently higher than the national average for years where data is available. The number of exclusion in 2018 – 19 is the highest for the period 2014 – 15 to 2018 – 19. To reduce the number of exclusions the school needs to strengthen further its approaches to developing positive relationships and ensure all young people have appropriately challenging and engaging learning experiences.



- The majority of young people requiring additional support who left school in 2018 achieved literacy at SCQF level 5 or better. The percentage achieving at this level is an improvement on the previous four years and is now above the VC. Improvement in numeracy shows no clear pattern. Less than half of young people requiring additional support who left in 2018 achieved numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better. This is below the VC.
- SIMD shows a profile where 11% of young people live in deciles one to two, 78% in deciles three to eight and 11% in deciles nine to ten. In 2018, attainment for young people leaving school, as measured by average total tariff points, is significantly lower or much lower in deciles one to three, five and nine compared to young people who live in similar SIMD data zones across Scotland.
- The destination indicators compare well with the VC, local and national comparators. Almost all young people who left school between 2014 and 2018 have moved on to a positive destination. The percentage of young people leaving for a positive destination was significantly higher than the VC in 2015 and 2018 and significantly much higher in 2016. In 2018, the majority of young people left school for either higher education or further education. Approximately a third of young people left to go in to employment. This included retail, hospitality and construction.

### Context

Perth Grammar School is one of four secondary schools in the area providing an enhanced provision (EP) for higher levels of targeted support for young people with more significant ASN. The EP aims to provide meaningful learning opportunities within a safe and caring environment. At the time of the inspection, 32 young people received support within small groups and, where appropriate, within mainstream classes. The EP has experienced a number of changes in staff in recent months.

### QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Within the EP, almost all young people engage well with their individualised support programmes and literacy and numeracy groups. A calm and supportive learning environment supports positive relationships between staff and young people and their peers. In these groups, almost all young people are motivated and focused on tasks. When given opportunities to work together, learners respond well, displaying responsible attitudes and sharing confidently their views on, for example managing challenging situations. In the senior phase, young people continue to benefit from small group support where appropriate. They develop important skills for life and work through college link courses and voluntary placements in the community including assisting at a local care home.
- Staff aim to provide an inclusive learning experience where learners achieve their potential through positive nurturing, experiences. In the best examples, learning is well supported by a wide range of learning activities, visual prompts and digital technology. Pupil support assistants provide well-targeted and effective support. Most teachers in mainstream classes understand the needs of young people from the enhanced provision. Most are aware of appropriate support strategies to support learners' emotional and social needs and help them to focus on their learning. However, teachers are not aware of pupils' learning targets. As planned, sharing young people's individual education targets with teachers in mainstream classes will help teachers to plan to meet learners' needs more effectively.
- Teachers assess young people's progress in literacy and numeracy and share this with parents at reviews of their children's progress. However, approaches to assessment vary and teachers' professional judgments are not yet reliable. Staff recognise that they need to develop further approaches to evidencing young people's progress within the BGE including in other curriculum areas. To ensure that all young people are making appropriate progress, it would be helpful for senior staff to carry out regular checks on individual learners' progress. This will ensure that planned learning provides appropriate levels of pace and challenge. A few parents would like to know more about their children's progress within the BGE.

### QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- According to the school's own information, most young people in the EP at S1 – S3 are making appropriate progress in literacy and numeracy, taking account of their ASN. Over half of young people in the EP are working within the first level in literacy and numeracy and under half are achieving within the second level. The EP is beginning to improve its approaches to gathering meaningful data over time about young people's progress within the BGE. An analysis of young people's progress in achieving literacy and numeracy targets set within Individual Education Plans would provide further helpful information to support individual progress.

## **Attainment over time**

- Over the past three years, young people are gaining an increasing number of passes in NQs. In 2019, all young people attained passes in course awards at National 2 (N2) or above in English and Communication and N2 units in Number Skills. Most achieved N2 passes in Food, Health and Wellbeing and at least one other course award in another subject at N2 or above. The EP is planning to extend the range of NQs offered to young people in 2019 - 20 including reinstating SQA Steps to Work.

## **Achievements**

- Young people in the EP are particularly encouraged to participate in health and wellbeing activities. These include swimming weekly at the local special school, athletics events, Boccia and horse care and riding in addition to PE. This is improving their understanding of how to stay healthy and helping to build their confidence and self-esteem. Almost all young people at the senior phase who undertook the ASDAN Silver Award in S4 in 2019 were successful. A few young people in S4-S6 attained Duke of Edinburgh's and Saltire Awards over the past three years.

## **Equity**

- Most young people in the EP confidently move around the school and access mainstream classes, when appropriate. Most are confident in discussions with others including in mainstream classes and can express their opinion when asked. All young people who left the EP in 2019 went on to a positive destination at college.

## 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.