

Summarised inspection findings

Buchanan High School

North Lanarkshire Council

11 February 2020

Key contextual information

Buchanan High School is a local authority, non-denominational special school located in Coatbridge, North Lanarkshire. The school moved into a new campus in 2012. The purpose built campus is shared with a North Lanarkshire secondary school and a community centre. The school provides education for secondary-aged young people with a range of additional support needs. At the time of inspection, the school roll is 138.

1.3 Leadership of change

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 and senior leadership team (SLT) are providing effective leadership across the school. The SLT are highly visible and work alongside staff well to promote the vision, values and aims of the school. Almost all staff adopt inclusive and nurturing approaches to support and engage young people with their learning. They now need to ensure that all young people, parents and partners have a full understanding of the vision, values and aims of the school.
- Almost all staff have positive and trusting relationships with young people, parents and partners. They are providing a safe, caring learning environment which impacts positively on outcomes for almost all young people. School attendance is high, exclusions are low and learners are engaging positively with their learning. The school's aim to enable young people to achieve success in all areas of the curriculum is leading to improved attainment for most young people.
- In recent years, there has been a significant rise in the number of young people attending the school. Led effectively by the SLT, the school has adapted well to overcome the challenges faced by an increased school roll. The school has changed its approach to class groupings, broadened curriculum choices at the senior phase and introduced a range of accredited personal achievement courses.
- The SLT supports staff's career-long professional learning (CLPL) well. The headteacher ensures time is planned for staff to attend CLPL activities which are directly related to identified areas of improvement. Whole school professional learning on literacy programmes and supporting learners with language and communication needs have been valuable. The school has also formed links with a Scottish university to help staff meet the needs of young people with autism spectrum disorder better. Staff have adapted their practice and taken forward new initiatives. This is beginning to have a positive impact on learners' attainment.
- Current school improvement priorities take account of the National Improvement Framework and local authority initiatives. They clearly target the needs of learners attending the school. The strategic planning of continuous improvement needs to be developed further. There needs

to be clearer identified outcomes for young people and how the school, aided by the school community, plan to close attainment gaps. Led by the SLT, staff need to start analysing data and information about learners' progress. This will better identify and promote approaches and initiatives that are impacting positively on young people's outcomes.

- The SLT provide a culture where most staff feel confident to contribute to, and at times lead on, school improvement. Staff across the school are empowered to develop the curriculum within their specialist areas. All teaching staff contribute to or lead an aspect of school improvement. The Parent Council are consulted on all matters of school improvement including how the school uses its Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) allocation.
- A PEF funded support worker is providing targeted young people with access to wellbeing workshops and personal achievement opportunities. Resources to improve engagement in literacy and numeracy support have also been purchased with PEF monies. Over the last year the school has successfully raised attainment in literacy for targeted groups of young people.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with learners, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Almost all teachers and additional support needs assistants (ASNAs) have caring, nurturing relationships with young people. Most staff use a variety of strategies well to promote positive behaviour. They help young people to feel safe, happy and included, leading to a calm, orderly environment within the school. Most staff are responsive to the needs of young people. They interact sensitively with individuals requiring additional support. This is helping almost all young people to engage in a positive manner and increase their readiness to learn.
- Teamwork is a strength across the school and this supports the quality of learning and teaching. Almost all teachers and ASNAs are highly motivated to support young people to engage in their learning. ASNAs have a good understanding of the particular needs of young people they work with. They are adept at providing individual support especially in assisting learners who are anxious or distressed. Targeted interventions are beginning to have a positive impact on learners. Teachers and ASNAs now need to work together to provide differentiated support which meets the needs of all learners more effectively. This includes developing the use of specialised resources further to meet the individual needs of all learners.
- Most classroom spaces are bright and attractive and highlight the achievements and successes of young people. Staff make effective use of outdoor areas to support learning. Dedicated outdoor spaces for activities such as cycling proficiency and horticulture enhance young people's experiences. Young people are proud of their school and enjoy discussing their learning, achievements and charity work.
- Young people participate well in practical, real life learning activities such as running a school community café. These activities are enhancing young people's communication, interpersonal and numeracy skills. In the senior phase, personalisation and choice is a positive feature in the school. Young people are accessing high quality work-based learning in a number of areas including construction, hairdressing and horticulture. Young people enjoy attending college and working more independently. This is effectively supporting young people through the post-school transition process and into positive destinations.
- In most classes, there are high expectations of what young people can achieve and this is helping to raise attainment. In most classes, learning experiences are delivered at a level appropriate to most young people's needs. In these lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning well and use questioning techniques effectively to deepen learners' understanding. However, in a minority of lessons, tasks and activities are dull and boring and often too easy for a minority of learners.
- In a minority of classes, teachers are using digital technology well to support teaching and learning. In a few lessons, digital technology is used very well to support young people to

communicate and engage more fully in tasks and activities. Senior leaders are aware of the need to continue to develop the use of digital technology.

- Almost all teachers use a range of formative and summative assessment approaches to help monitor how well young people are progressing with their learning. Most learning activities build on prior learning. Most staff use a sufficient range of assessment approaches to make judgements about young people's progress with their learning. There are robust quality assurance and moderation systems in place in the senior phase which meet the requirements of National Qualification verification procedures. In the broad general education (BGE), staff are beginning to use the national benchmarks to support their professional judgements. The school is aware of the need to participate in more moderation activities. Teachers need to collaborate more with other schools to support further their understanding of the standards required to achieve a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level.
- In recent times, the school recognised the need to track and monitor learners' progress better. A recently introduced commercial package is beginning to assist staff in taking forward this area of improvement. Staff are beginning to track each learners' progress more systematically. The school is tracking attainment over time for cohorts of learners and this identifies a positive pattern of improving attainment.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The curriculum is providing relevance and flexibility, particularly in the senior phase where young people prepare well for their transition to work, college or training. The school offers appropriate progression routes from BGE into the senior phase. The varied pathways available to young people reflect the personalisation and choice being offered at the school. A few young people attend lessons within the neighbouring school on the same campus. There is potential to expand this partnership further to help provide more choice for learners.
- Across the school, there is a strong focus on building young people's skills for learning, life and work. Young people can confidently articulate which skills they are learning and how these skills will benefit them in the world of work. Young people are confident and contribute well to the community and to the life of the school. At the senior phase, they participate in work placements, volunteer in the community and attend local colleges. A few young people also attend summer and Easter programmes that school partners have developed.
- Young people receive a BGE that includes all curricular areas. There is a particular focus on literacy with recent interventions and initiatives resulting in increased attainment in reading and writing across the school. As a next step, the school needs to place more focus on numeracy, digital literacy and health and wellbeing.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents are actively involved in transition planning and reviewing young people's progress. Almost all feel welcomed into the school and say that staff communicate very well with them. Parent Council membership is a strong feature of the school with numbers higher than in most special schools. The school collaborates well with the Parent Council and places value in the views of the group.
- As young people are placed at the school from across North Lanarkshire Council, it can be challenging for many parents to be regular visitors to the school due to transport costs and time constraints. A minority of parents visit the school's regular coffee mornings and school events. The school needs to offer more family learning initiatives to encourage parents to be more involved in their child's learning and the life of the school.

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

good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins 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

- Across the school, there is an inclusive, caring and supportive climate. Almost all young people have positive relationships with staff based on mutual trust and respect. Almost all young people feel safe, cared for and able to approach staff with any needs or concerns. This is enabling almost all young people to maintain high levels of attendance, try new things and improve their confidence and wellbeing.
- Almost all staff have a sound knowledge of the needs and aspirations of young people. They respond sensitively to young people experiencing any anxiety or distress. As a result, young people participate well in their learning, make positive behaviour choices and build their skills for learning, life and work. Support at key points of transition is a particular strength of the school. Almost all young people settle quickly upon starting a placement at the school. Through high quality bespoke planning, almost all young people successfully move into positive destinations when they leave school.
- Almost all young people are improving their wellbeing. They participate in a range of physical and sporting activities which are improving their fitness. Healthy lifestyles are promoted across the school. Young people know the risks of smoking, alcohol and unhealthy eating. In personal support classes and assemblies, all young people access a range of learning experiences to promote wellbeing and challenge discrimination. This is helping most young people to make friends, appreciate the risks associated with social media and celebrate diversity. Most young people need to develop further their understanding of discrimination, notably in relation to the protected characteristics and stereotypes. A few young people benefit from targeted small group support to improve identified aspects of their wellbeing. With the support of specialist partners and identified training, staff should offer more therapeutic and personalised interventions to help improve young people's wellbeing further.
- All young people have 'Getting It Right For Me' (GIRFMe) plans which allow them to share their needs, interests and aspirations. Although these plans centre around the wellbeing indicators, most young people are not yet reflecting on their own wellbeing needs. All young people have individual targets for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Young people are actively involved in identifying targets and reviewing their own progress. However, most targets are too generic and are not meaningful to young people. The school should streamline its approaches to planning for each child. Young people need support to reflect on their own wellbeing and to take fuller ownership of their individual targets.
- Supported by regular CLPL, almost all staff have a sound working knowledge of statutory duties and codes of practice related to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. There are effective policies and procedures in place across the school. Commendably there have been zero exclusions in the last three years and almost all young people maintain high levels of attendance. The school needs to ensure that its complaints policy and procedures are easily accessible and understood by young people.

- Staff work diligently to provide equal opportunities for all young people. They work closely with the wider school community to ensure that young people are not disadvantaged in relation to their mainstream peers. Young people build their confidence and self-efficacy skills through participating in bespoke individualised learning programmes, particularly in the senior phase. High quality community learning, work placements and work based learning are a strong feature of the school. Engaging in these activities is improving young people's wellbeing alongside building their skills for life and work. The school shares a campus with a mainstream school. Young people share a dining area and engage in a few joint classes, lunchtime clubs and initiatives with their mainstream peers. Young people develop their communication and social skills well through engaging with a wider peer group. The school should continue to identify further ways for young people to integrate purposefully with the wider school campus.
- Young people and their families are given a voice to contribute to decisions which impact upon their personal circumstances and the life of the school. Almost all young people report that they feel listened to and believe they have a say in decision making. A few senior learners suggested that their views were not always given full consideration.

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

- Almost all young people are making good progress in literacy and numeracy taking account of their additional support needs. In recent years, the school has successfully raised young people's attainment in reading, listening and talking. This is helping young people to participate more fully in learning activities across all areas of the curriculum.

Listening and talking

- Almost all young people are making good progress in listening and talking. Young people listen well and show consideration and respect toward the views of other learners. Most learners respond well to questions provided by staff and can offer appropriate responses. When supported, most young people can contribute well to class discussions. Most young people in the pupil council are able to respond well to what others say, offer suggestions and articulate their own views. Across the school, almost all learners can talk about what they are learning. However, most require support to explain how these skills could be used in the future.

Reading

- Most young people require additional support to engage with a range of texts. A majority of learners are receiving a targeted approach to help improve their reading skills. Aided by this intensive support, most young people can read familiar and unfamiliar words in texts. Almost all young people are making good progress in developing their comprehension skills.

Writing

- Almost all young people are making satisfactory progress in writing. A few learners can produce extended pieces of writing across a range of curricular areas. However, almost all learners use worksheets or workbooks to scaffold their writing. A minority of young people are able to create written arguments independently, write short scripted sentences and work collaboratively developing short texts. Young people need further support to record information better, write longer sentences and create a wider range of texts.

Numeracy and mathematics

Number, money and measurement

- Almost all young people working at the second level are able to identify multiples and factors of whole numbers. With support, they can apply this knowledge when solving number problems. Most young people can read and record time in both 12 hour and 24 hour notation and are able to convert between the two. Most young people know the relationship between commonly used units of time and can carry out simple conversion calculations. The majority of young people can apply their money skills in the weekly in-house café. Through the process of baking and

cooking, most young people demonstrate their ability to weigh, measure and judge timings. When volunteering at the cafe, young people can conduct sales, total bills and work out how much change to give customers.

Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, most young people can identify and use concrete materials to enhance their understanding of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most young people working at first level are able to correctly identify and describe features of three-dimensional objects such as side, face, edge, base and angle.

Information handling

- At first level, most learners can identify suitable ways to collect data, organise it in a chart and display it using bar graphs. Supported by careful questioning from teachers, most young people are also able to interpret and draw conclusions relating to their data. Most young people understand mathematical vocabulary such as likely, probable, certain and possible. Teachers need to support learners to use technology to enhance their presentation skills in information handling.

Attainment over time

- In recent years, there is an improving trend in attainment over time. Last session, most young people gained a good number of National Qualifications units and course awards, predominantly at National 3 and National 4. This is an improvement on previous years in which National 2 was the prominent standard for course awards. This shift in the school's attainment profile is due in part to raised expectations of what qualifications young people can achieve in the senior phase. Most young people in the senior phase are attaining qualifications at appropriate levels. However, a few learners have the potential to gain more awards and at a higher level.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Strong partnerships with local sporting agencies have helped young people to access a range of ways to achieve through sport and physical activity. Young people gain valuable awards in lifeguard training, coaching and employability. They also display increased confidence and develop their health and fitness as a result of participating in these courses. Commendably, a few young people are able to perform at competition level in sporting activities.
- Young people attend a variety of initiatives in the community including a training café, a horticulture programme and a choir at the neighbouring school. This is helping young people to work with others, communicate effectively and apply their literacy and numeracy skills. Young people are building their resilience through participating in the Rock Challenge project.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a sound understanding of the needs of young people and their families. They provide equitable support, taking appropriate account of additional support needs and the socio-economic profile of each learner. Young people are not disadvantaged due to their personal circumstances or additional support needs. As a result, school attendance is high for almost all learners. In recent years, almost all young people move onto a positive post-school destination in further education, training or employment. Working with partners, the school should now identify ways to determine if young people are successfully sustaining their post-school destinations.

School Empowerment - Curriculum

- The school are at the early stages of developing an empowered system in curriculum improvement and practice. Teaching staff are activity involved in working parties to develop the curriculum and better meet the needs of learners across the school. A few staff take a lead role in literacy and English across the school, including developing and enhancing resources for use across all curriculum contexts. Teachers from mainstream schools are visiting the school to observe the approaches used to improve literacy. The Parent Council is often consulted by the SLT prior to significant changes to the curriculum. The headteacher, supported by the teaching staff, is considering additional ways to involve a wider range of stakeholders to lead change in curricular improvement.

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.