

Summarised inspection findings

Bothwellpark High School

North Lanarkshire Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

Bothwellpark High School is a local authority non-denominational special secondary school, located in Motherwell. It shares a campus with Our Lady's High School. The school provides full-time educational placements for young people selected for attendance following an assessment of their additional support needs by their local authority.

The school roll at the time of inspection was 63 young people from a diverse geographical area, but predominantly from within the south of North Lanarkshire. Around one third of young people have an entitlement to free school meals. Attendance prior to this academic session was below national averages. This academic session, attendance is currently in line with national averages.

The local authority appointed an acting headteacher in May 2023. The acting head teacher is also a permanent headteacher of another local authority special school and shares his time equally between the two schools. To support the shared headship arrangement, the local authority has appointed an additional acting deputy headteacher. An acting principal teacher has also been appointed as part of the temporary arrangements. A number of staff have left the school since August 2023. The local authority is undertaking recruitment to fill vacant positions.

The school is in a period of significant transition including its planned relocation to a refurbished area within the Edward Lawson Centre, Wishaw. At the time of inspection, the proposed date of entry to the Edward Lawson Centre was August 2024.

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 acting headteacher has been effective in developing a supportive school culture that ensures young people's rights are upheld and respected. The acting headteacher, supported well by other senior leaders and staff, ensures almost all young people experience meaningful and positive relationships. The supportive school culture and meaningful and positive relationships are helping to reduce young people's anxieties and develop a positive attendance pattern at school. Staff work well to help young people develop respectful relationships beyond the school community. Most young people interact positively during activities and are confident in accessing community activities. In the majority of classes, staff provide most young people with relevant activities that motivate them to engage well with their learning. They provide appropriate levels of support for young people to ensure they are active participants during learning activities.
- Staff support a minority of young people to exercise choice and increase their independence when participating in learning activities. In these learning activities, staff provide appropriate levels of support to young people and encourage them to attempt less familiar tasks. Young people need more appropriate opportunities to take responsibility and become more

independent in their learning. This will help young people understand how they are developing the four capacities within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

- Staff are beginning to use an increasing range of learning environments effectively. For example, staff provide relevant learning activities within the community, in other local schools, in the retail sector and in woodland areas. Overall, most young people are responding positively to these opportunities. For a few young people, learning out with the school building is having a significantly positive impact and is providing them with more creative ways to learn. Staff should continue to develop opportunities for young people to develop their skills further in real life and meaningful outdoor contexts.
- Overall, staff use interactive screens appropriately to introduce activities and support young people's understanding of a subject. In the majority of classes, staff use alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) approaches effectively to help young people express themselves in alternative ways. For example, staff use pictures and symbols well to help young people predict the sequence of the school day, share their emotions and respond to questions. This is helping young people demonstrate their understanding of an activity and share what they have learned. Senior leaders should work with staff to develop further how AAC resources could be used more consistently across all classes to enrich all young people's learning. There are a few young people in the school that do not have access to their individual AAC resource. There is a need to ensure all young people have appropriate AAC devices or software available to support them to communicate effectively with others.
- Teachers set learning at the right level for a few young people in the class. However, across the school, staff do not differentiate sufficiently whole class learning activities for all young people. Senior leaders should support staff to develop learning activities that ensure all young people are challenged appropriately. These activities should be individualised, where required, to meet young people's learning needs.
- Senior leaders, together with staff, have recently introduced new arrangements for monitoring and tracking young people's progress. This is at the early stages of implementation. Staff are positive about how the system will support them to identify attainment and achievements. Senior leaders should continue to develop their approaches to tracking and monitoring as they continue to embed the new system, so that these lead to improved attainment for all young people.
- Senior leaders have developed and introduced planning approaches that support teachers well to put in place individual programmes for young people across the curriculum. Plans show clearly how young people will demonstrate success in their learning and how staff will identify progress. Pupil profile information includes plans related to young people's social and emotional needs. These plans support staff well to understand and use strategies to help young people engage in their learning. Teachers now need to ensure that planned programmes translate to the delivery of well-considered individual learning activities.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to inform their professional judgements about progress and achievement. This includes observations of learning, questioning and examples of work. Teachers use national Benchmarks well to support their assessments. Teacher's learning evaluations are detailed and provide useful information to support future planning. Staff make use of assessment evidence such as pictures, videos and staff statements to demonstrate success effectively. Staff should now share this evidence more consistently with parents and carers.

- In recent years, teachers have not had sufficient opportunity to engage in meaningful moderation activities either internally or with neighbouring schools. As a result, moderation is not informing teachers' professional judgements of young people's progress in the BGE. As teachers increase their participation in moderation activities there is potential for them to make decisions around how to accelerate young people' progress in learning. Senior leaders now need to strengthen the use of systematic moderation activities. This will help teachers improve their confidence in making professional judgements on how well young people are progressing with their learning over time.

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

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 learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, the majority of young people are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. The minority of young people are making good progress.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most young people are developing their listening and talking skills, showing progress from prior levels. Most young people generate vocalisations and respond positively to familiar routines while working within CfE experiences and outcomes. Most young people working at early level are expressing their views and making simple choices, using a range of communication approaches. The majority of young people are confident in engaging in conversations and communication exchanges with adults or their peers. The minority of young people could develop their communication approaches further so that they interact, take turns or present information, appropriate to their needs. Senior leaders and staff, supported by partners, should develop greater communication approaches to help these young people develop confidence in their communication.

Reading

- Most young people are developing their pre-reading and reading skills well. Young people respond positively to visual timetables. They identify pictures or symbols successfully to understand their daily activities. Young people working at early level show awareness of books and are able to describe stories they like. Young people at first level consistently read an increasing number of words, showing an understanding of the word's meaning. Children do not have sufficient opportunities to read for pleasure. Senior leaders and staff should introduce classroom or school libraries with a range of appropriate and motivating texts to support reading development further.

Writing

- Across the school, the majority of young people are developing their fine motor, pre-writing, and writing skills well. At early level, the majority of young people are able to form letters and create simple sentences. Young people working at early level and first level need to apply their writing skills across the curriculum and in real-life contexts. Teachers should make better use of digital technology to help young people translate their thoughts and ideas into writing.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of young people are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few young people could be making better progress. Across all areas, young people require more individualised approaches to numeracy and mathematics to ensure they

have opportunities to achieve as well as possible. Across all stages, they should be supported to apply numeracy skills in real life and meaningful contexts.

Number, money and measure

- Young people at the BGE are using number well in a range of situations, relevant to their stage. They are completing calculations successfully using the four operations. For example, young people identify coins, select the correct coins to purchase items and can use money in real life situations. Young people are identifying units of measure and correctly measuring the volume and length of everyday objects. They are experiencing and comparing different weights of everyday items. Almost all young people understand the sequence of events through the use of daily calendars. At the senior phase, young people are working towards national qualifications at National 1.

Shape, position and movement

- A few young people are exploring the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They identify the number of sides of shapes such as triangles and pentagons.

Information handling

- Young people are sorting items using simple charts. A few young people are using tally marks to organise information appropriate to their CfE level. Young people now need to expand their use of other ways to record and display information, for example using appropriately a growing range of charts or graphs.

Attainment over time

- The majority of young people at the broad general education (BGE) make satisfactory progress with their learning and engagement over time across most areas of the curriculum. A minority of young people are making strong progress. A few young people could achieve more and be supported better to accelerate their progress. Senior leaders and staff now need to ensure that they analyse data and evidence of young people's progress over time more robustly. In doing so, they will be more able to focus on improving young people's attainment and progress across all areas of the curriculum.
- Since 2021, most young people in the senior phase have gained a number of National Qualifications units, predominantly at National 1. They successfully achieved awards across a range of curriculum areas including literacy, numeracy, music, and science. However, there is potential for young people to achieve more across a broader range of subjects. Senior leaders and teachers recognise this area for improvement and are beginning to develop the senior phase curriculum. This session, most young people in the senior phase are working towards achieving a wider range of qualifications, often at National 2.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people enjoy engaging in a wide range of personal achievement activities. These include developing work skills at a school barista bar, developing their safe cycling skills and enjoying participating in South American drumming and music programmes. Young people participate purposefully in an increasing range of achievement opportunities from across the curriculum with particular focus on expressive arts. Young people also access a number of valuable community events including a Breakfast with Santa which supported their interaction with community partners and over 100 guests. Young people's achievements are celebrated and shared via digital platforms, assemblies and in the local press. Their achievements could be showcased more prominently in displays across the school. This will support young people share their achievements with visitors to the school. Through participating in personal achievement activities, young people are building useful skills in communication, working with

others and social interaction. However, most young people do not yet appreciate the skills they are developing through their achievements. Staff should continue to support young people to recognise the skills they are developing, notably those skills for life, learning and work. As planned, young people in the senior phase need to be supported to engage in more Careers Education and participate in meaningful work placements.

- Almost all young people move on into appropriate training or further education upon leaving school. However, a few young people move on into part-time training programmes that do not fully offer them suitable progression from school. Staff should work with community partners to identify post-school destinations which meet better the needs of all young people.

Equity for all learners

- All young people in the school face significant barriers to learning as a result of a range and complexity of additional support needs. Staff work well to improve experiences and outcomes for most young people. This includes a recent and positive impact on raising attendance across the school, which is now in line with national averages. The rise in attendance reflects very well the recent improvements made by senior leaders in developing a broader range of educational experiences across the school week.
- Senior leaders are at the early stages of developing approaches that help young people accelerate learning and reduce barriers to learning. Over recent years there has been little measurable impact of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Senior leaders have predominantly used PEF to resource literacy initiatives or reduce the cost of the school day. The literacy-based PEF initiatives from previous years are no longer being progressed within the school. Therefore, these PEF initiatives have not contributed to reducing attainment gaps, for example in reading and writing. There is a need for senior leaders to ensure that initiatives aimed at improving equity, attainment and achievement are embedded and are sustainable across the school for targeted young people. It is important that senior leaders are clear on how they will measure the impact and outcome initiatives have on raising attainment for all young people.

Other relevant evidence

- Senior leaders have begun to take positive steps to increase the range of curriculum areas that young people access across the school week. This includes initiating links with other schools in the local authority to provide specialist learning spaces, educational opportunities and subject specialist teaching. Senior leaders should continue to build upon this positive start so that all young people have opportunities to access all curriculum areas.
- Senior leaders should ensure that all young people receive their full educational entitlements within Curriculum for Excellence. In doing so, they should ensure all young people have a timetable designed around their needs and that provides a full educational programme, including two hours of high-quality physical education every week.
- Senior leaders should work with parents, young people and appropriate agencies to consider whether young people meet the criteria for a coordinated support plan (CSP). Senior leaders should ensure that they consider whether looked after young people require a CSP, in line with statutory guidance.
- Senior leaders are at the early stages of supporting parental involvement in determining the focus of PEF spending in the school. Over recent years, parents have not been aware of how the school uses PEF and whether PEF spending had made a difference to young people in the school. The acting headteacher should continue with his plans to engage parents in appropriate discussions around PEF spending.
- Nutritional regulations apply to food and drinks provided to young people in school. All staff must be aware of these and understand where they apply when making decisions about food and drink provided for young people across the school day. For example, biscuits and confectionery provided as snacks can be high in calories but provide little of nutritional value. Frequent consumption can have a potentially damaging impact on dental health because of the sugar content. Sweets in particular are not permitted under the standard for confectionery.
- It is recommended that senior leaders incorporate all areas of food-based activity and learning into a school food policy to support a consistent approach to learning, and the application of the Nutritional Regulations across all aspects of school life.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

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|-------------------------|---------------|
| 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.