

# Summarised inspection findings

**Denny High School**

Falkirk Council

18 March 2025

## Key contextual information

School Name: Denny High School

Council: Falkirk Council

SEED number: 575438

Roll: 1394 (in December 2024)

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In September 2023, 22 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2023, 12 per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2022, the school reported that 36 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

### 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

- Senior leaders recently refreshed school values in consultation with the school community. These values underpin a positive ethos where young people are encouraged to stay determined, aim high, value learning, be creative and achieve success. Staff promote the values well with young people through assemblies and learner conversations. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that the values are well understood by all and are fully embedded in classrooms and in the day-to-day life of the school.
- Senior and middle leaders have streamlined and restructured school improvement planning processes. They identify clear and measurable priorities with a clear focus on improving outcomes for young people. These priorities are captured succinctly in the school improvement plan (SIP) which reflects national and local priorities, with wellbeing as the initial focus. The SIP articulates with faculty improvement plans and informs school improvement group plans. School improvement and Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) plans are shared with members of the Parent Council. Senior leaders now need to involve parents and partners more effectively in planning school improvement.
- The headteacher is highly regarded by young people, staff, parents and partners. He has a clear collaborative approach to leading school improvement. The headteacher and the senior leadership team have worked well together to improve the school ethos. They have a determined focus on promoting positive relationships and improving the school's sense of community. They have identified correctly the importance of improving the quality of learning and teaching across the school. An important next step is to review the curriculum, including clear progression pathways for all learners. This should underpin the school's strategy for raising attainment and achievement.
- Senior leaders empower middle leaders effectively to contribute to whole school improvement. They have created collaborative structures which enable middle leaders to meet regularly to plan for improvement, measure the impact of interventions and share effective practice. For example, middle leaders led the implementation of the 'Learning and Teaching Blueprint' and approaches to improved learner conversations. As a result, almost all teachers ensure that lessons are well structured, and all young people are supported to engage in learning conversations across all curriculum areas.
- Senior leaders have strengthened the school approaches to self-evaluation. They have developed an effective whole school self-evaluation calendar which defines roles and responsibilities in evaluating and improving the work of the school. This includes clear expectations to support improved approaches to data analysis, evaluating the quality of learning and teaching and ensuring that young people have the opportunity to express their views on their experiences at school. The 'Faculty in Focus' programme is beginning to support

senior leaders to measure more effectively the impact of interventions on outcomes for young people. Staff should develop further their skills in analysing data in order to raise attainment for young people.

- Senior leaders support middle leaders effectively to develop their approaches to planning and leading change in their faculties. Middle leaders are enthused, confident and accountable for improving outcomes for all learners. Most curriculum leaders have developed and implemented effective faculty self-evaluation calendars which align with the whole school calendar. Curriculum leaders undertake regular lesson observations, seek the views of young people and use evidence gathered to inform priorities for improvement. They should now develop a clear approach to using this information to inform more clearly strategies for raising attainment.
- The headteacher promotes distributed leadership well across the school. There are positive examples of leadership at all levels in driving forward change and improvement. Staff are enthusiastic and keen to lead improvement priorities. They report that they feel trusted and confident in offering ideas and implementing approaches to improve their professional practice. Most teachers are empowered to lead through school improvement groups which align well with whole school and faculty priorities. Almost all staff lead activities during family engagement events which include a focus on transitions and home learning. As a result, staff feel an increasing ownership of improvement and a shared sense of responsibility.
- Senior and middle leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to improvement through the professional review and development (PRD) process. Planned professional learning is linked effectively to school and faculty improvement priorities. Staff are supported well to undertake a range of career-long professional learning (CLPL) opportunities. This includes subject specific learning, developing their leadership skills and improving their understanding of trauma informed practice and nurturing approaches. As a result, almost all staff report that they feel supported to engage in CLPL and that this helps them to reflect on and improve their practice.
- All young people have the opportunity to participate in the 'Pupil Voice Group.' This enables them to influence school improvement and change. For example, young people led approaches to engaging the school community in refreshing the school's values, improving the learning environment of the school and driving improvements in the regularity and quality of learner conversations. Senior leaders and staff should build upon these existing practices to offer more young people opportunities to lead change.
- Senior leaders work effectively with staff to develop a clear plan for the use of PEF. The strategy is resulting in a few young people having the resources and support to engage more fully in school. Staff, working effectively with community learning and development (CLD) partners, are improving outcomes for a few young people who require additional support. Senior leaders have rightly identified the next step is to incorporate the CLD programme into the school improvement plan.
- School leaders have well established relationships with staff from Skills Development Scotland (SDS). Staff benefit from carefully planned professional learning from SDS partners to support improvements. For example, a few staff have completed online learning about Labour Market Intelligence (LMI). This is leading to an increased awareness of the role of skills development and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) priorities. Departmental staff include the use of LMI within their curriculum plans in line with DYW priorities. This is reflected well in school and faculty improvement plans. This helps ensure that young people receive their career education entitlements.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

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

- In almost all lessons across the school, there are respectful relationships between young people and their teachers, creating a positive climate for learning. The school has recently achieved a national award which recognises the warm and nurturing ethos in classrooms. Young people feel included and well supported in school.
- In almost all classes, the recently introduced 'Learning and Teaching Blueprint' supports a shared understanding of the structure of a lesson. This has been effectively implemented in all subject areas and supports a more consistent experience for young people across the school. Young people talk confidently about the 'blueprint' which is supporting their readiness to learn.
- In the majority of lessons, starter activities are well-paced and planned appropriately to recap prior learning. Learning intentions and success criteria are consistently used in almost all lessons. In a few lessons, this is supporting young people to understand what they need to do and how to measure progress in their learning. However, success criteria too often focus on the completion of tasks rather than how young people make progress in learning. Teachers should now focus on the quality of learning intentions and success criteria so that young people in all classes can understand and articulate what successful learning looks like. In a minority of lessons, teachers use plenaries effectively to review young people's progress. Senior and middle leaders should develop and share this good practice across the school.
- In almost all classes, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear and lessons are well structured. Across the school, teachers use questioning effectively to check knowledge and recall. In a minority of classes, teachers use highly effective questioning to challenge young people and develop higher-order thinking skills. As planned, staff should continue to develop approaches to checking for understanding, including questioning.
- Middle leaders and teachers are increasingly taking account of young people's views on learning. This is leading to staff developing a variety of approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. For example, teachers are increasingly using a variety of approaches which involve young people working collaboratively and, at times, independently. Learners appreciate the regular opportunities to work collaboratively and engage in self- and peer-assessment. Teachers should develop further opportunities for young people to take responsibility for their learning, share ideas and reflect on their progress.
- Almost all teachers have an understanding of the needs of individual young people from helpful pupil profiles. However, in the majority of lessons, learning is not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all learners. This results in a few young people not being fully engaged in their learning and demonstrating low-level off-task behaviour. Teachers need to better use the high-quality pupil profiles to more fully meet the needs of all young people. This would help

teachers plan more effectively and set tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty, ensuring appropriate pace and challenge for all.

- In a minority of lessons, real life and engaging contexts enhance the learning experiences for young people. This includes linking learning activities to skills and careers. These experiences enhance young people's motivation and help them make meaningful connections across their learning. Senior leaders should continue, as planned, to develop a more consistent approach to the development of the Denny skills framework.
- All young people have their own digital device which enables them to access resources such as class notes, presentations, and assignments in class and at home. Almost all teachers are making effective use of devices to enhance young people's learning experiences. A minority of teachers use digital technology effectively to differentiate tasks and activities to better meet the needs of all young people. Young people are confident in using their device and access a wide range of activities to support them with their learning. Devices are also used effectively to support young people with learning at home.
- The majority of staff are confident in their use of assessment in the broad general education (BGE) in S1 and S2 and in the senior phase. Most teachers, when planning learning activities, include a range of assessment approaches. The majority of teachers use formative assessment strategies effectively to support well young people's understanding of their progress in learning. This includes strategies such as exit passes, digital surveys, 'show me' boards and peer assessment. In a few lessons, teachers adjust their planning effectively to meet well the needs of young people. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that this strong practice is shared more widely across the school.
- Teachers in all faculties plan assessment effectively in S1 and S2, using national Benchmarks and engage in regular internal moderation activities. The majority of teachers are confident when making assessment judgements of young people's learning in S1 and S2. There is an inconsistency to approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment in S3 across the school. Middle and senior leaders now need to consider how to better support teachers with approaches to planning. This includes using experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks in a clear and consistent way in S3 that clearly demonstrates young people's progress in their learning.
- In the BGE, a minority of faculties engage in moderation activities with schools across the local authority. Senior leaders need to ensure that all faculties engage in external moderation activities, including with associated primary schools. This would improve the validity and reliability of data and support more effective planning for the transition to S1.
- In the senior phase, most teachers understand well national standards and use this knowledge effectively to plan appropriate assessments. In all faculties, moderation and verification arrangements are developed well and support valid and reliable judgements. In the senior phase, teachers in every subject are involved in local authority wide moderation activities. Teachers value working across establishments. They use internal Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) appointee expertise to support better their understanding of SQA standards.
- Learner conversations take place in almost all subjects in the BGE and the senior phase. In the senior phase, learner conversations support young people well to know better what they need to do to make progress in their learning. They value the individual conversations they have with their teachers. In the BGE, a minority of faculties use learner conversations to set high-quality meaningful targets.

- All staff are implementing a new whole-school approach to tracking and monitoring young people's progress. This is supporting staff to develop a more consistent approach to monitoring the progress that young people are making over time. Staff are at an early stage of sharing this information with parents and young people. Senior and middle leaders are becoming increasingly confident in identifying appropriately the young people in both the BGE and senior phase who will benefit from the well-developed pyramid of interventions. Young people in the senior phase speak positively about the range of interventions used by their class teachers, following tracking, to support them to achieve their target grades. Teachers should now develop further how they use this tracking information to inform better their planning for progression.



## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff are developing valuable links with associated primary schools. Productive work has taken place in a minority of curriculum areas to plan joint programmes of work and moderate standards. This is helping to build on prior learning in a few subject areas such as music, art and physical education (PE) and in a shared approach to skills development. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to extend primary-secondary curriculum transition in literacy and numeracy to better support young people's progression.
- Staff are at the early stages of developing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum as a responsibility of all.
- The School Skills Framework is visible in almost all learning spaces and staff and young people can articulate its relevance. Almost all young people in S1 and S2 have one period per week of 'Forming Skills' on their timetable. This helps them begin to identify how they are developing skills across their learning.
- In S1 and S2 young people receive their full entitlement to a BGE across all curriculum areas. Teachers deliver courses using CfE experiences and outcomes, mainly at second and third level.
- At the end of S2, almost all young people choose five subjects in addition to English and mathematics. Almost all courses are studied for two years with certification at the end of S4. Senior leaders need to reflect about the nature of the pathways available to young people into the senior phase and plan strategically to improve these. Choices made at the end of S2 are critical in determining learning pathways through the senior phase. The current structure of option choices at the end of S2 may deny young people the important benefits of a BGE up to CfE third level or better in a few curriculum areas. In almost all subjects, the curriculum in S3 is planned around the requirements of National Qualifications (NQs). These decisions must be informed by effective tracking and monitoring of learners' progress through the BGE. Decisions should also be informed by discussions with parents and learners about the range of pathways open to young people.
- In the senior phase, almost all young people in S4 are presented for seven NQs. Most young people study five subjects in S5 and four subjects in S6. The senior phase offers young people progression pathways in almost all curriculum areas and subjects. Staff offer a range of qualifications from Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 3 to SCQF level 7 for young people. The School of Dance and the School of Rugby enable a minority of young people to specialise in these areas from S1. This supports them to progress Higher National Certificate (SCQF level 7) by S5 and S6. Care needs to be taken to avoid closing off options to qualifications and subsequent pathways for young people as they progress through the senior phase. Whilst it is possible to change courses at the end of S4, in practice this can be difficult.
- There has been a recent focus on designing flexible pathways within all curriculum areas. Led by middle leaders a range of SCQF awards and courses in areas such as computer game development and sport and recreation are beginning to provide flexible routes to ensure young people complete courses and achieve. It is important that senior leaders maintain a strategic overview of developments that will inform a clear curriculum rationale and ensure that progression pathways for young people enable them to maximise progress in their learning.
- Staff have worked closely with key partners to identify and deliver opportunities to meet the needs and aspirations of young people. In the senior phase, young people access a range of



courses through both school and college. A minority of young people benefit from work experience opportunities provided by local employers in a range of sectors. These placements give young people valuable insights into workplace expectations and offer a range of career choices for their future.

- Young people in S5 and S6 do not have a continuing element of religious and moral education (RME). Senior leaders should ensure that all young people continue to experience learning in RME that is meaningful and progressive from S1 to S6. Young people in S1-2 experience continuity of modern language learning in line with the Scottish Government's 1+2 languages policy.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Senior leaders, staff and partners have worked well together to develop effective strategies to engage parents. This includes a range of well-received communication approaches such as newsletters and the recently improved school website.
- Staff also engage parents well through helpful parental information evenings in school on a range of relevant topics. Parents value these events as they help them to support their child at home.
- The Parent Council works well in partnership with senior staff to support the school. They have supported with the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fayre. The Parent Council purchased senior ties for all young people to help families with the cost of the school day. The Parent Council successfully secured funding from a Denny district community grant to purchase a machine to introduce coffee making into the curriculum. The Parent Council should move forward in partnership with the school to become involved in school improvement planning.
- Most parents feel comfortable in contacting staff and they are confident that staff will respond effectively to addressing any concerns. Parents appreciate the way that staff support achievements and a range of sporting, musical and other events in 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 children and 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

- The school's welcoming, caring ethos is evident in the positive relationships between staff and young people. Positive interactions between staff and young people demonstrate how this supports learners well. Most young people feel safe, included and respected. They value the many spaces available to them across the school where they feel safe and included. Young people who require additional support thrive in the calm, quiet areas within Integrated Pupil Support (IPS).
- Senior leaders give strategic direction to staff across the school to support the wellbeing and targeted learning of young people. The strategy 'All About Me' offers a pathway to success for young people through a focus on attendance, behaviour, organisation, uniform and timekeeping. Young people would benefit from a broader and more consistent illustration of the strategy across all curriculum areas. 'All About Me' is also helping young people to understand the wellbeing indicators and the impact on their own wellbeing. They are more aware of their mental wellbeing through wellbeing surveys. A few have started to set goals for improvement. Young people require further guidance on how to make these goals more specific and measurable. All young people would however benefit from setting wellbeing targets, that are then reviewed to monitor progress.
- The IPS Team has a well-planned approach to identifying and supporting wellbeing needs. Young people's health needs are met further through access to a wide range of partners and services such as counselling and support for anxiety or loss. Staff prioritise supporting the positive mental health of young people and their families. A significant number of staff are trained as Mental Health First Aiders. A helpful Family Wellbeing Toolkit signposts a wide range of school and local support for young people and their families. This is supporting young people to access further support, when required.
- Heads of House deliver a programme of personal and social education (PSE) to young people in their caseload. Young people learn about key areas of health and wellbeing. Staff should, along with young people, review the programme to ensure clearer progression in learning and skills development. This programme should reflect equality and diversity better. Alongside the planned increased focus on the rights of the child, this will support young people to learn about and value each other's differences even more.
- The school's primary transition programme is well-planned and reduces anxiety amongst young people and their families. Parents with young people requiring additional support value the extra transition meeting they are offered as well as the enhanced support their child receives. They believe it makes them better able to support their children.

- Senior leaders and the IPS Team target resources well to ensure positive levels of attendance for most young people. The overall attendance rate is just higher than the national average, having been below previously. Staff know young people and their families well and work creatively to increase levels of attendance. In collaboration with an extensive range of external partners and through well-judged use of additional resources, they have reduced persistent absenteeism. The school's unauthorised absence rate shows a decline and is lower than the national average. Attendance remains a concern for a minority of young people. Individualised arrangements are improving young people's attendance, progress in learning, timekeeping and reducing anxiety. This may include a reduced timetable at school on a short-term basis. Senior leaders should ensure a clear strategy for agreeing and reviewing this particular arrangement.
- Staff plan individual approaches well which meet the needs of young people. This stems from almost all staff's strong understanding of how to fulfil their statutory duties for getting it right for every child. Staff are supported well through valuable professional learning including monitoring attendance and identifying and supporting young people who require additional support. Almost all staff have achieved the 'Keeping the Promise' award and a few staff are putting into practice professional enquiry in how to improve outcomes for those who are care experienced. The quality of support offered is improving outcomes for both groups of young people and individuals.
- Almost all young people who require additional support are supported effectively by well-judged strategies to help them overcome a wide range of barriers to learning. They benefit from a range of interventions and the creative use of resources. Senior leaders and staff work effectively with partners to support young people and reduce a range of barriers to their learning. Young people and their parents are involved in important decisions relating to their support. Young people who require additional support often have targets from different types of assessments of needs. Staff need to bring these targets together and streamline them. This would help young people understand better their progress and next steps in learning and development.
- Specialist staff provide teachers with well-established overviews of young people's needs and recommended strategies. These are used effectively by most staff to meet the needs of young people with identified support needs. Specialist staff should evaluate systematically how well recommended strategies are used to support young people's learning and improved outcomes and progress across the school.
- Young people who are care experienced and those who are young carers are supported very well by specialist staff, partners, including link officers in the local authority. Staff track the progress, attainment and attendance of these young people. Young people network regularly and build valuable friendships with other young people who have similar circumstances to them. Staff are at the early stages of implementing improvements suggested by care experienced young people, including individualised tutor programmes. Staff ensure young carers have statements and that young people who are care experienced are considered for a Co-ordinated Support Plan.
- Young people contribute well to national accreditation to show how the school's work improves outcomes for inclusion and equalities. For example, the efforts of young people and staff have been recognised with awards for impacting on approaches to children's rights and promoting inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights. Most young people feel that the school helps them to understand and respect other people and that incidents of bullying are handled well. Staff monitor patterns in behaviour referrals and bullying effectively. Young people's learning should result in more coherent experiences in equalities and diversity,

including through quality and progressive learning in RME across S1-6. Senior leaders are now at an appropriate point to review and articulate their approaches and vision for equalities in a whole-school leadership strategy. This should be underpinned by regular professional learning for staff.

- 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.

### 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

##### BGE

- The school has maintained high levels of performance in literacy over time. In 2022/23 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. Most young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy and a majority attained CfE fourth level in numeracy in 2022/23 by the end of S3. There has been a notable improvement in numeracy attainment from 2021/22 to 2022/23.

#### Senior phase

##### Leavers

- Most young people who left school between 2019/20 and 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. Since 2020/21, there has been a decline in attainment at this level. Performance at SCQF level 6 shows an improvement but in the latest year reached its lowest level and is now significantly lower than the VC.
- Almost all young people who required additional support and who left school in 2020/21 and 2021/22 achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy. Most young people who required additional support and who left school in 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy. A majority of young people who required additional support and left school between 2020/21 and 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy, improving from a minority in 2018/19 and 2019/20.
- Most young people who left school achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, significantly higher than the VC in 2020/21 and 2021/22 and in line with the VC in 2022/23. A minority of young people who left school from 2018/19 to 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This improved from significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC between 2018/19 and 2020/21 to in line with the VC in 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- Almost all young people who required additional support and who left school in 2020/21 and 2021/22 achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy. Most young people who required additional support and who left school in 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy. A majority of young people who required additional support and left school between 2020/21 and 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, improving from a minority of young people in 2018/19 and 2019/20.



## **Cohorts**

### **Literacy**

- At S4, there are high levels of performance at SCQF level 4 or better at all stages, with the school performing significantly much higher than the VC. Most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy from 2021/22 to 2023/24, although there has been a decline over these years. By S5, based on the S4 roll, a minority of young people from 2021/22 to 2023/24 achieved literacy at SCQF level 6 but show steady progress over these years, generally in line with the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, there is inconsistent improvement at SCQF level 6.

### **Numeracy**

- At S4, there is high levels of performance at SCQF level 4 or better, at all stages, with the school performing significantly much higher than the VC. At S4, the majority of young people have generally achieved SCQF level 5 or better from 2019/20 to 2023/24. Attainment has declined between 2021/22 and 23023/24. By S5 and S6, based on the S4 roll, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 from 2021/22 to 2023/24, in line with the VC.

### **English and mathematics**

- At S4, the percentages of young people who achieve a grade A to C and grade A at National 5 in English are below the national figures in 2023/24 and the percentage of no awards is higher than the national figure. By S5 and S6 at Higher level in English, the same pattern is evident with the exception of the percentage of young people who receive no award. This is in line with the national figure.
- At S4, the percentages of young people who achieve a grade A to C and grade A at National 5 in applications of mathematics are below the national figure in 2023/24, while presentation levels are considerably higher than the national average. In mathematics, the percentage presented is the same as the national figure, but the percentage of young people who achieve grade A to C or grade A passes is considerably below. This pattern is also evident by S5 and S6 at Higher level.
- Senior leaders should continue to address attainment in English and mathematics. This includes considering whether young people are following a pathway which will enable them to attain to their highest level and experience success. It also involves consideration of the impact of double presentation in mathematics and applications of mathematics on enabling young people to make progress in their learning and achieve to their highest level.

### **Attainment over time**

#### **BGE**

- By the end of S3, most young people are achieving CfE third level or better in all subject areas. By the end of S3, the majority of young people are achieving CfE fourth level. Senior leaders should ensure that they have a clear overview of progress within each curricular area over time.
- There is a high percentage of young people, nearly two-thirds, who are dual presented for National 4 and National 5. A third of these account for more than two subjects.

### **Senior phase**

#### **Leavers**

- Attainment for the lowest attaining 20% and the middle attaining 60% of young people using average complementary tariff points is generally in line with the VC between 2018/19 and 2022/23. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people who left school

between 2018/19 and 2022/23 has improved from significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC in 2018/19 - 2020/21 to in line with the VC in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

## **Cohorts**

- At S4, by S5 and by S6 attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people is generally in line with the VC. Senior leaders should continue to ensure consistency of improvement for these groups.

## **Breadth and Depth**

- At S4, a minority of young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better, in line with the VC from 2020/21 to 2023/24. Performance in the last three years at SCQF level 5C or better shows a decline across all numbers of qualifications from one or more to 8 or more. Passes at SCQF level 5A or better are generally significantly lower than the VC in the same period. By S5 a minority of young people achieved three or more to five or more or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better, generally in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2022/23. In 2023/24 this declines to significantly much lower than the VC. By S5 in 2023/24, a few young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better, significantly much lower than the VC. By S6 a minority of young people achieved three or more to five or more or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better, in line with the VC from 2020/21 to 2023/24. There has been an improvement in the latest year at SCQF level 6C or better including top quality passes. By S6, a few young people achieved two or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better, generally in line with the VC.
- Young people at S4 are presented for a significantly higher number of SCQF qualifications than the national average. In 2023/24, 63% of young people were presented for 8 or more courses with a fifth achieving success at SCQF level 5 or better. Senior and faculty leaders are currently working to identify the value added by additional courses to young people's attainment and experiences. Senior and faculty leaders should explore further whether progression pathways for young people enable them to maximise progress in their learning.
- Through the Learning Zone and other interventions, the school has commendably moved from a model of young people who require additional support attaining a set number of qualifications at SCQF level 3 to a wider, more aspirational and more individual range of levels and subjects such as music technology and environmental science.

## **Overall quality of learners' achievement**

- There are real strengths in the school's approaches to learners' achievements. A majority of young people across the school take part in a range of achievements which support them to develop a wide range of skills within the framework of key school values such as determination, achieving success and creativity. Young people value highly their input to the life of the school and their wider community, organising fundraising activities for their chosen charity. A majority of young people in S5/6 have achieved an additional SCQF accredited qualification from wider achievement. These include coaching, dance teaching and subject ambassadors. As a result, young people in the senior phase articulate well the skills they are gaining. These skills include increased confidence, improved problem solving and better communication skills. Young people recognise the benefits of the considerable range of opportunities to participate in activities of interest and enjoyment which support their wellbeing and sense of belonging. This is further strengthened by the House system. Increasing numbers of young people take part in inter-house events and competitions. These are led by young people and by staff and shaped by young people's suggestions on what the events should be.

- Young people are confident about approaching staff with ideas for activities, which they are then supported to run. The wide range of activities helps young people to access activities which interest them and to develop their confidence and self-esteem. A significant number of young people are developing an active lifestyle during lunchtime and after school activities largely in the PE faculty. This is leading to an improving trend of young people being involved in these physical and sporting activities.
- The school's approach to engaging young people with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award is removing barriers to participation. Funding is available for fees and equipment, if needed. As a result, the school has a well-established bronze and silver programme with approximately 30 young people completing their bronze award last year.
- Recognition of young people's achievements, in and out of school is well-established and celebrated through social media, school assemblies, noticeboards and emails to parents/carers. The praise postcard system, used by both staff and young people, recognises achievement and gives thanks to individuals. This contributes to young people feeling valued and part of the school community. In addition to a prize-giving for academic and sporting achievement, senior leaders are developing a more value-based recognition system in order to recognise the achievements of more young people. The recently developed achievement tracker has the potential to recognise a broader range of young people's achievements across all subjects.
- The recently developed achievement and participation trackers help to track levels of activity and identify young people not currently participating. There are effective approaches adopted by senior leaders to ensure that these young people are targeted and supported to take part in achievements. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to develop the trackers and regularly analyse the results to identify patterns and trends, and participation levels against the overall school roll. This will help to ensure that activities are meeting all learners' needs and aspirations. Further consideration should be given to accreditation for young people's achievements, where appropriate.

### **Equity for all learners**

- There are strong approaches to support young people who reside in SIMD 1 and 2 with improvements in attainment outcomes. Pupil support assistants and teachers lead individual and small group interventions effectively to develop further young people's literacy and numeracy and social and emotional needs. These interventions are having a positive impact. Young people in SIMD 1 and 2 have improved their literacy attainment at SCQF level 4 or better and level 5 or better in recent years. Performance in numeracy is similar and consistently above the VC. In addition, positive destinations remain strong for learners in SIMD 1 and 2 and show an improvement.
- Almost all staff have a strong understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school. Staff focus appropriately on reducing the poverty-related attainment gap and costs associated with school. Senior leaders use PEF effectively to support targeted groups of young people who live within deciles 1-3 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), as well as cohorts of young people, such as those whose attendance is persistently low. This includes by improving their access to the curriculum, through nurturing approaches, a focus on positive destinations and increasing attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Staff, working effectively with partners including SDS, colleges, employers and universities, support almost all young people to move to a positive destination on leaving school. The 16+ meetings, which include external stakeholders, ensure that almost all young people at risk of

not achieving a positive destination receive support. These meetings are instrumental in helping them develop essential skills for learning, life, and work, laying a solid foundation for their future. Senior leaders should continue to support young people to a positive destination.

### Context

The Additional Support Centre (ASC) supports young people requiring significant support with aspects of their learning. At the time of inspection, there were 35 young people in the ASC, ranging from S1 – S6. Young people attend the ASC from across the Falkirk Council area. All young people attending the ASC follow personalised learning programmes. They attend a wide range of mainstream classes as part of their programme, particularly from S3 onwards. A deputy headteacher (DHT) has overall leadership responsibility for the ASC.

### Leadership of change

- Senior leaders and staff in the ASC have a strong understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of young people and their families. They have a good awareness of young people's interests, needs and aspirations. Senior leaders have created an ASC improvement plan which aligns closely with the priorities within the overall school improvement plan. Young people, parents, partners and staff's views of the ASC's performance are sought systematically and contribute to future priorities for improvement. Senior leaders should ensure that the evaluation of progress with improvement priorities focuses more clearly on the resulting impact upon outcomes for young people.
- The APT has made a purposeful start to leading change within the ASC. They are building a clear direction for positive change, identifying well future areas for improvement such as young people's learning pathways in the senior phase. Staff are increasingly leading identified areas for improvement. Staff, supported by the DHT, should now strengthen self-evaluation approaches in the ASC. Closer scrutiny of young people's attainment, progress and levels of engagement over time will provide valuable evidence to help identify future areas for improvement.

### Learning, teaching and assessment

- Staff work effectively to develop a positive, caring culture within the ASC. They support young people to follow organised structures and routines well. Staff use a range of individualised approaches such as movement breaks, to help young people keep engaged with their learning. As a result, almost all young people succeed within the classroom setting most of the time. In a few lessons, young people spend too much time on unstructured activities which offer little value. Staff should continue to identify creative ways to support all learners to engage meaningfully in purposeful learning activities.
- In most lessons, young people are supported well to settle quickly into learning when they come into the class. Most teachers have established clear routines at the beginning of lessons. These include appropriate starter activities, exploration of what young people will learn and how they will know they have been successful in learning. Teachers effectively support most young people to understand the purpose of their learning. In most lessons, teachers have high expectations of young people and promote independence in learning. Teachers use digital technology well to enhance young people's learning experience. In a few lessons, learning can be overly teacher directed or pitched at too easy or too hard a level. As a result, young people can become passive learners, resulting in missed opportunities for young people to lead their learning and be more active contributors.
- Teachers use observations and assessments to measure young people's progress in both the BGE and the senior phase. Assessment of young people's progress takes account of personal interests, strengths and gaps in their learning. Overall, young people are working at appropriate levels, and most learning activities are well suited to their needs, interests and

aspirations. Senior leaders need to plan more moderation activities for teachers in the ASC both internally and with other special provisions. This will help increase further teachers' confidence in making accurate professional judgements of young people's progress and attainment.

### **Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion**

- Staff in the ASC are attentive to the wellbeing needs of all young people. They work together well to provide appropriate care and support to young people. Almost all young people benefit from positive, nurturing relationships with adults and each other across the ASC and wider school. As a result, almost all young people attend school regularly and make progress with their learning. A few young people and parents report that young people in the ASC can be subject to bullying from their peers. Staff need to continue to be vigilant in ensuring that behaviours do not impact negatively on any young person's wellbeing.
- In the ASC, all young people have regular contact with adults with whom they have meaningful and supportive relationships. Most staff have detailed knowledge of the wellbeing needs of young people. If a young person becomes anxious or dysregulated in class, most staff adopt a useful range of personalised strategies to support young people effectively. However, the small ASC learning environment means that young people are frequently required to access busy communal areas in the ASC if they need to be out of class for a period of time. Senior leaders and staff need to identify and create welcoming spaces in both the ASC and wider school for young people to access in such circumstances.
- Young people in the ASC are very well included in the wider school. Almost all young people successfully attend mainstream classes daily. Staff in the ASC work closely with subject specialist colleagues to plan and deliver learning activities, taking account of young people's individual needs. Young people feel welcome and valued in the school, experience success with their learning and are building valuable skills for learning, life and work, as a result. Young people would benefit from being supported to access more out of class activities and school clubs. Collectively, staff use effective approaches and strategies taken from young people's individual plans and pupil profiles. Senior leaders and staff should now ensure that all young people's plans and pupil profiles are of a consistently high standard.

### **Raising attainment and achievement**

- Overall, taking account of individual learner profiles, most young people make good progress in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics.
- Most young people at the BGE and senior phase make good progress with their attainment over time. A minority of young people could make more progress, particularly at the senior phase.
- Recently introduced tracking systems in the ASC do not yet provide sufficiently reliable information to track all young people's attainment and progress over time at the BGE. As planned, senior leaders and staff now need to continue to develop their approaches to tracking and monitoring young people's progress over time more robustly.
- At the senior phase, most young people attain successfully a good number of NQs and other awards. They gain qualifications across a wide range of curriculum areas including history, music and hospitality.
- Staff in the ASC recognise the importance of supporting young people to develop employability skills. They have introduced a range of personal achievement activities this session with an



increased focus on skills for life and work. Young people in the BGE are increasing their awareness of skills including resilience and working as a team. Young people in the senior phase engage in careers education activities including work placements. Most young people in the ASC move on successfully into training, further education or employment upon leaving school. A few young people gain awards for their personal achievements. Staff should identify more ways for young people to receive accreditation for their achievements.

## **Other information**

### **Curriculum**

- Young people in the ASC follow a broad and balanced BGE curriculum including opportunities for personalisation and choice. A minority of young people in the senior phase are unable to access their preferred subject choices due to a range of factors. This can result in young people following part-time learning programmes or engaging in alternative learning activities which do not meet fully their needs or aspirations. Senior leaders need to introduce more learning pathways which enable young people to attain well and experience success across the curriculum. As a priority, senior leaders should ensure that all young people access a full-time learning programme tailored to their needs and aspirations.



## 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.