

# Summarised inspection findings

**Firpark Secondary School**

North Lanarkshire Council

12 November 2024

## Key contextual information

School Name: Firpark Secondary School  
Council: North Lanarkshire Council  
SEED number: 1000144  
Roll (provided by school): 174

Firpark Secondary School is situated in Motherwell. Young people are selected for attendance at Firpark Secondary School by the local authority following assessment. Most of them are transported to school in local authority buses or taxis. A few senior pupils travel independently to school, often on public transport. The school is currently led and managed by an acting headteacher, supported by two deputy headteachers. Young people in S1, S2 and S3 follow the broad general education. Those in S4 and S5 focus on National Qualifications and those in S6 have an individualised, vocational curriculum.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In September 2022, 100 percent of pupils were entitled to free school meals.

The school reports that 22 percent of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2022, the school reported that 100 percent of pupils had additional support needs.

### 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

- Staff at Firpark Secondary School promote positive relationships and behaviour effectively across the school. Teachers develop positive relationships with young people during daily registration and through regular Personal Learning Planning sessions. The Home School Partnership Officer supports positive relationships and behaviour and links in closely with teachers, parents/carers and young people to assist in the planning of next steps and monitoring progress. Staff have designed and implemented programmes to develop young people's understanding and awareness of safeguarding issues and to develop their resilience. Deputy headteachers lead termly assemblies to highlight and support the school's positive approach to behaviour. All of these approaches contribute positively to young people respecting each other and staff in classes.
- Staff put specific supports in place for individuals with any identified issues as required. For example, if young people are having problems with friendship groups or would benefit from peer or group mediation. Staff know young people very well and identify quickly when they are

uncomfortable, unhappy, or distracted. They act swiftly to ensure that these issues do not escalate, and that the young person receives the support they need. There have been no incidents of seriously disruptive behaviour within the last year. Senior leaders monitor regularly recording on pastoral notes so that identified issues, including behaviour, can be followed up promptly. In most lessons, staff support learners to settle quickly when coming into class. Teachers take learning activities forward at an appropriately brisk pace. In most lessons, young people are motivated and enthusiastically engaged in their learning. Most staff take account of young people's interests and needs well when planning learning activities.

- Across the school, teachers encourage young people regularly to connect their learning to real-life contexts to support their understanding. Young people are motivated by learning activities which teachers link to recognisable situations. For example, by using real coins when solving money-related problems. Teachers also encourage senior phase learners to think about the skills they are developing during activities, and how they may use those skills once they leave school. This is helping young people to prepare for work placements. Staff use learner profiles to identify, create, monitor, and evaluate individual targets for young people. Senior leaders should now ensure that teachers share these targets more widely with support staff to maximise opportunities for learning.
- In most lessons, most children and young people engage positively with their learning and interact well with staff. Young people are particularly motivated by practical activities on offer such as hospitality, rural skills, and technical studies. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to collaborate with teachers and improve the overall consistency of the quality of learning and teaching. For example, too many lessons are dependent upon the use of commercially produced worksheets, rather than being based upon the interests, needs and backgrounds of young people.
- The majority of teachers use communication tools effectively to gather feedback and plan learner experiences and next steps. These are helpful for post-school transition planning. Staff should now develop a greater consistency of approach with regards to the use of standardised symbols and visuals to support teaching and learning and encourage communication.
- Most teachers use digital technology effectively to enhance and support teaching and learning in their classes. Most young people use devices well to help access activities. This includes young people using a range of appropriate software successfully to reduce any barriers to learning. This is enabling most young people to become increasingly independent in learning.
- The school building does not have a library. The senior area was previously occupied by North Lanarkshire Council library services. Teachers in the English department have small class library areas to encourage young people to borrow and read books. English teachers support this by providing a wall display which highlights books that young people may wish to read. As planned, staff should develop and sustain a culture of reading amongst young people.
- Young people benefit from the well-planned use of assessment data by staff when joining the school in S1. Staff gather assessment information before young people transition from P7. Key school staff visit almost every primary school as part of this process. Senior leaders use achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels (ACEL) data well to complement the Transition Information Overview document for every young person. In addition, staff use literacy and numeracy data effectively to assess young people's attainment at the point of transition. Staff can then place young people in S1 literacy and numeracy classes with young people of similar ability. This approach helps young people to make good progress in their learning. Staff review the baseline data at regular points throughout the year using further assessment work. This can lead to staff moving young people to a more appropriate class

where their needs will be even better met. As a result, young people benefit from school staff understanding their levels in literacy and numeracy well and helping them to make good progress.

- Teachers are gradually improving their approaches to assessment and moderation within the school. All teachers take part in useful moderation activities and a few teachers engage in moderation activity with other teachers outwith the school. Senior leaders should now provide teachers with more strategic and systematic opportunities to undertake moderation activities with teachers from other schools.
- Almost all staff show a sound understanding of young people's needs. Young people benefit from well-judged support from school staff who apply agreed support strategies. They identify and meet young people's support requirements in a way that takes account of young people's abilities, strengths, and preferences. Staff set relevant targets for all young people to support them with their communication and regulation needs. Staff should now focus on developing targets further to ensure they are skills based, measurable and time specific. This will help staff focus on the skills that they will teach, how they will teach them and clear measures of success. Teachers should include support staff and parents in the setting, monitoring, and review of these targets.
- In most classes, apart from literacy and numeracy, staff group young people together based on an assessment of their social characteristics rather than their learning abilities. To meet varying needs in the same class, all teachers are planning across a variety of levels to provide differentiated learning within lessons. However, on a few occasions, the learning experience provided is the same for all.
- Teachers plan lessons structured around the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. However, the current planning approach is not detailed enough to formally record information about the individual learning needs of young people or to indicate how the teacher will be differentiating learning for them within lessons. In most classes, teachers use their knowledge of the needs of young people to make appropriate adjustments for individual learners.
- Staff have implemented a system of tracking and monitoring progress across all stages. This system provides accurate profiling data of young people's progress and is helpful for staff identifying patterns, strengths, and gaps within learning, especially where young people are working across more than one level. In developing this system further, staff should consider ways in which to moderate the quality of young people's work so that they can make the best progress in their learning.

## 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

## 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- All young people attending the school require additional support to benefit from school education. Young people are making good progress in literacy and numeracy, accounting for individual learner profiles.

### Attainment in literacy

- At all stages, most young people are making good in developing their literacy and English skills. A few young people are making very good progress.

### Reading

- At first level, young people are enthusiastic readers and are building their sight vocabulary. They demonstrate their ability in skimming and scanning text. They form opinions and predictions about what they are reading. At second level, young people understand many of the technical aspects of writing. In the senior phase, young people are reading short stories and answering comprehension questions. They are able to comment on character attitudes and tone, supporting their answers with appropriate quotations from the text. Overall, young people would benefit from access to more up-to-date texts which they can identify with.

### Writing

- At first level, young people are skilled in using an online thesaurus to improve their writing. They have experience in writing short persuasive letters and reports. At second level, young people use tablet computers expertly to write. They produce writing for information as well as argumentative texts. In the senior phase, young people work together as a group and are able to capture everyone's points of view on a topic. Their extended writing includes a letter as an imaginative response to literature, character studies and presentations. However, they would now benefit from opportunities to write in a wider range of styles such as poetry, playscripts and stories.

### Talking and listening

- At first level, young people are enthusiastic contributors to class conversations. However, they would benefit from further opportunities to delivering solo talks in class. At second level, young people discuss and review directorial choices in media studies. In the senior phase, young people enjoy debating contentious topics. They are keen to share their opinions about the text they are studying. They are developing their skills in turn-taking and responding to non-verbal cues from others.

### Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- At all stages, most young people are making appropriate or better progress in developing their numeracy and mathematics skills. However, staff could support more effectively a minority of

young people to develop their knowledge in, and understanding of, numeracy and mathematics in more meaningful contexts.

### **Number, money and measure**

- Most young people across CfE levels use the four operations appropriately to solve mathematical problems, appropriate to their level. The majority of young people across the broad general education (BGE) identify correctly the monetary value of coins and notes, in line with their CfE levels. The majority of young people at first level are not yet confident when using simple fractions beyond half. For example, they require further practice ordering fractions or working out a fraction of an amount. Most young people across CfE levels use their understanding of measurement well across a range of curriculum areas and real-life contexts.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- Almost all young people recognise and identify correctly common two-dimensional (2D) shapes. At first level, young people calculate the perimeter of 2D shapes accurately using whole numbers. Across all CfE levels, young people need to develop further their vocabulary of three-dimensional (3D) shapes. A minority of young people would benefit from developing their knowledge of shape, position, and movement in everyday contexts.

### **Information handling**

- Young people use their knowledge of colour, shape and size and other properties to sort and arrange a range of objects, appropriate to their CfE level. At first level and second level, young people use tables, charts, and graphs to present information that they have gathered accurately. At second level, young people are not yet able to demonstrate their understanding of probability to influence their decisions around likelihood of something happening.

### **Attainment over time**

- Senior leaders have appropriate processes in place to baseline and track young people's progress through their BGE and across all curriculum areas. They now need to analyse this data and information to ensure that all young people are making and maintaining high standards of attainment over time. Senior leaders should use data and information better to identify young people who would benefit from additional support to ensure that they make continuous progress.
- Data provided by senior leaders shows that most young people are progressing well through both BGE and senior phase. The majority of young people within the BGE are working at early, first and second level with a few learners working at third level. Most young people at the BGE stage have raised their attainment across all curriculum areas and make good progress from prior levels. Since 2020, young people are gaining a higher number of National Qualification units and course awards at increasingly higher levels. More young people are gaining National Qualification units and course awards at National 3, National 4, and National 5.
- Most young people sustain positive levels of attendance at school which helps them to make progress in learning. However, a few young people have significantly low levels of attendance which is directly impacting upon their attainment over time. There is a need for senior leaders to support these young people and their families to increase their attendance so that they can build the skills and knowledge required to improve their attainment.

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

- Staff offer young people accredited achievement opportunities across the BGE. These include the Saltire Award, Dynamic Youth Awards, the NL Challenge Diamond Award, and the John Muir Award. Young people value these opportunities and appreciate the chance to develop their skills in areas beyond their subject classes. For example, in the John Muir Award they are



developing their awareness of nature. In the NL Challenge Diamond Award, young people successfully undertake activities for up to 15 hours linked to providing a service, keeping fit, developing a skill and going on an adventure. Young people also benefit from a range of opportunities to take part in local and national sporting events.

- Staff develop further achievement opportunities for young people in the senior phase. For example, the Duke of Edinburgh award, which builds upon skills developed in the NL Challenge Diamond Award. The award is rewarding for young people, who are becoming fitter, developing new skills, and contributing to their local community. Since 2022, 31 young people in the school achieved the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award. A further 13 will have achieved the Silver award by the end of session.
- Staff run successful residential trips for young people. Staff organise them carefully to ensure that all young people can participate in them, for example, those who are wheelchair users. Staff provide a supportive context for young people to develop their physical skills in activities. Young people develop increased confidence in their own abilities during these residential trips and improve their social and teamworking skills. This provides increased motivation to write about their experiences when they return to school.
- Staff celebrate young people's school success regularly with others using the school app and on noticeboards in school. For example, young people developing their paddle boarding skills as part of the NL Challenge Award. However, senior leaders are aware that staff now need to do more to find out about, celebrate and record young people's achievements which take place out of school. They should also have a clearer focus on the skills young people are developing through these achievements. Parents agree that it is important to celebrate these achievements on a more regular basis.
- A minority of young people have developed important leaderships skills as a result of their participation in the pupil council. These young people are more confident in suggesting changes to improve life within the school. Staff should now increase the range of opportunities so that all young people develop leadership skills across all stages in the school.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Data provided by senior leaders shows that the school has successfully reduced the poverty related attainment gap in literacy and numeracy for young people. Senior leaders now need to ensure that the use of Pupil Equity Funding is evaluated. This will evidence more fully what has made the greatest impact on improving measurable outcomes for young people.
- Staff and partner agencies have undertaken professional learning to help them promote equity and ensure that young people are not disadvantaged by their needs not being met. This has recently included mental health first aid and support for young people's emotional regulation. As a result, staff and partners have improved their capacity to meet a wider range of needs and have developed a greater consistency of approach.
- Staff have developed a wide range of partnerships with agencies and companies in the local community. Partners know young people and their needs well, building pathways which are based around their strengths. They see the school as a partnership hub. As a result, school staff have been able to provide young people with a range of transition pathways to life beyond school, including further education, higher education, voluntary work, and supported employment.
- Staff have success in identifying and organising relevant and purposeful work experience opportunities for young people in the senior phase. A few S4 and S5 young people, and the



majority of S6 young people, engage in work experience related to their interests across a diverse range of placements. These include Motherwell Heritage Centre, Volvo Café Hospitality and Summerlee Photography. Young people are developing relevant employability skills through these placements. Following these opportunities, across the past four years, almost all young people leaving the school have gone on to positive destinations, including supported courses and employment.

## Other relevant evidence

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

## 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.