

Summarised inspection findings

Balwearie High School

Fife Council

SEED No: 5406838

16 January 2018

School Name **Balwearie High School**
Council: **Fife Council**
SEED number: **5406838**
Roll (Sep 2016): **1,547**

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

In February 2017, 13% of pupils were registered for free school meals, which is in line with the national average.

In September 2016, 20-25% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.

In September 2016, the school reported that 26% of pupils had additional support needs.

Key contextual information

The senior leadership team is composed of the headteacher, five depute headteachers and a business manager. The recently appointed headteacher has been in post since April 2017.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

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

- Staff articulate a strong commitment to the school and most feel a valued part of the school community. Almost all staff describe having a better understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school following some whole school work focussing on this area. They now need to consider the implications of this understanding for improving their practice in learning and teaching and the wellbeing of young people.
- Through analysing a range of data, staff are increasing their understanding of the diversity of the school population. The school, through its matrix of young people's needs and its analysis of young people's attainment, is aware of the impact of deprivation. The attainment gap existing for some learners is being accurately identified. It is in this context that the school recognises the need to revisit and renew its vision, values and aims. In doing so it wants to take account of its strong sense of identity, acknowledge the needs of all young people and addresses the impact of socio-economic disadvantage. As the school takes this forward, fully involving all stakeholders in reflecting on the values which will underpin the work of school will be vital in developing a shared vision for the future.
- The headteacher (HT), in post for period of seven months, offers clear strategic direction. At the outset he surveyed the views of staff. Staff speak positively about their views being taken into account in determining the school's direction of travel.
- The HT, other members of the senior leadership team (SLT) and colleagues across the school have identified and are pursuing a number of priorities for development. While these are at very early stages of implementation they are already leading to changes in practices which, once successfully embedded, should have positive outcomes for young people.
- Staff are reporting a significant cultural shift. They are welcoming the opportunity to be increasingly more involved in a developing programme of distributive leadership, and are developing a clear understanding of their role in self-evaluation and school improvement.
- Staff talk about a greater sense of ownership and a strong shared commitment to securing positive outcomes for young people. There is scope for staff to be further involved in contributing and taking forward solutions and ideas which will enhance the wellbeing and development of young people.
- The priorities in the current school improvement plan (SIP) are not yet clearly signposted to those in the National Improvement Framework (NIF). Doing so would enable staff to

see the interconnectedness of their work better from departmental level through to national level. In evaluating developments outlined in improvement plans staff should ensure that they always gather robust evidence which will measure the impact of agreed points for action and inform further decisions. This will support the school in successfully managing the implementation of change.

- As the school continues to develop its approaches to school improvement, there is considerable scope to involve young people, parents, staff and partners in evaluating aspects of school life.
- The school has recently reviewed the remits and deployment of the SLT and other promoted staff with whole school responsibilities to provide a clearer strategic overview of aspects of school life. Similarly, there is a need to look strategically at the provision of pupil support to ensure that practices are meeting the needs of all young people.
- Principal teachers in managing their curriculum areas are offering valuable support and guidance to subject staff. The time is now opportune for the senior leadership team and principal teachers to develop a more effective strategic role in delivering their responsibilities.
- The recent introduction of a wide range of committees is enabling staff to reflect on current practice and shape the direction of improvements as a shared whole school responsibility. This is helping to build capacity across the school. Staff are being encouraged to assume leadership roles within a wider culture of distributed leadership, although there is scope to develop this further. When drawing together the work and recommendations of the in-house committees, it will be important to ensure that the pace of change is being effectively managed to ensure that agreed new approaches are being firmly embedded. The school may wish to synthesise common threads emerging from the findings of the committees to make it more manageable for them to be taken forward.
- Building on the rigorous analysis of SQA attainment data, the school now needs to widen its focus to include a more systematic approach to other areas. This should include school ethos, learning and teaching and the arrangements to meet the needs of young people, including increasing staff awareness of 'Getting it right for every child' and the wellbeing indicators.
- With the introduction of school prefects, the school is now looking to increase further the opportunities for young people to assume leadership responsibilities. This will develop their skills and attributes and which will have a positive impact on the ethos and life of the school.
- The school is developing its range of partners to target identified need. This extends to Skills Development Scotland (SDS), college, support agencies and third sector organisations to address better the needs of young people.
- A range of opportunities exist for professional reflection to support the process of change. Staff are being supported through a programme of professional development as part of the school's working time agreement. All teaching staff engage in an annual professional review and development meeting. This should be extended to include all members of staff. Staff attending professional learning opportunities or serving, for example, as SQA markers, are keen to cascade their expertise to other colleagues. Teachers engage well

together and through collegiate working are sharing professional learning in a number of areas including cooperative learning, growth mindset, assessment is for learning (AifL) strategies and making thinking visible. There is scope to extend this further to include a review of learning and teaching methodologies across the curriculum to ensure an appropriate degree of challenge for all learners at different stages. More robust programmes of evaluating learning will be necessary to secure a shared understanding across the school of what constitutes high-quality learning. To support change, staff would benefit from reviewing existing pedagogy and the extent to which it offers appropriate support and challenge for all young people.

- The school improvement plan has recently been revised with several planned actions intended to establish an improved shared sense of direction with stakeholders including partner agencies. There is recognition of the particular need to build on partnerships with local businesses and employers in order to improve provision for skills for work, employability and senior phase pathways.
- The SLT intends to put in place arrangements for strategic improvement planning with partners. Whilst relationships between partners and the school are positive, there is a need to develop more formal structures to enable joint planning for improvement and build a shared vision and values across the school community.
- Through PEF, the school has established a post of support services coordinator. The post holder is now taking steps to coordinate the work of partner organisations which work with the school. An analysis of need linked to SIMD data has been undertaken. Balwearie Raising Attainment Groups (BRAGs) have been established to improve provision for targeted groups of young people.
- The HT has established positive links with area Community Learning and Development (CLD) managers and the Family and Community Support team to begin to develop shared planning for improvement. The CLD team are keen to take the opportunity to work with the school on their improvement planning process and see opportunities to extend their offer into aspects of early intervention and prevention.
- Senior leaders recognise that implementation of both the Work Placement Standards (WPS) and the Career Education Standard (CES) is at a very early stage, and currently limited to awareness amongst the SLT. Senior leaders have yet to formulate a strategy as to how the WPS and CES will be promoted to staff and how the requirements are to be delivered to pupils. Staff awareness of the labour market intelligence and local employment opportunities is not yet well developed. Staff are not yet linking learning with routes to employment consistent well across subjects. There is scope to build on the support young people receive within the curriculum so that they are all fully able to identify future aspirations and plan for next steps beyond school.
- A Skills for Learning, Life and Work group was formed with the aim of driving the skills and employability agenda. As the work of this group continues it will provide further clarity and direction for activities within the school to support the development of skills for employability and awareness of the world of work for all pupils.

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

- Most young people engage with their learning and have positive relationships with staff. The majority of young people report that staff are approachable and supportive, and that they treat them with fairness and respect. Most young people are motivated to learn and achieve. They are attentive in class. In a few departments, young people's views about their learning experiences are taken into account and used by teachers to inform their planning for improvement. There is scope for the school to more actively involve all young people in making the decisions which impact on their learning. The school should now consider national expectations with regards to children's rights and responsibilities.
- Most young people enjoy learning at school. In almost all classes, explanations and instructions are clear. In most classes teachers share the purpose of the learning. In a minority this is supported by the use of well-planned learning intentions. In a few classrooms where learning intentions are linked effectively to well defined success criteria, young people are able to reflect on their progress in learning and identify their strengths as well as what they need to do to improve.
- The school has identified a set of core skills that young people should develop. This is at the early stages of implementation and is not embedded within the teaching approaches used across the school. Young people are not yet able to articulate how they are developing these skills.
- Overall, the quality of teaching across the school is not of a consistently high enough standard. The school should continue with plans to develop a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching that supports the needs of all learners. This must include improving teachers' approaches to questioning and supporting young people to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Young people enjoy opportunities to take part in effective collaborative learning techniques in a few classes. However, most lessons are overly teacher led with young people passive and not given sufficient opportunities to lead their learning. This can result in learning experiences which do not always meet the varying needs of young people. There is considerable scope for the school to develop its approaches to differentiation and ensure that there is appropriate pace and challenge.
- All staff have engaged in professional learning on the use of various teaching approaches. This is yet to be embedded sufficiently well within teaching practices. A refocused

Balwearie Learning and Teaching group has the potential to drive forward improvements and impact positively on the experiences of young people.

- While young people receive helpful verbal feedback from teachers to support their learning in the majority of lessons, overall it is not consistently of a high enough quality. There is scope to develop the quality of written feedback young people receive across all aspects of their school work, including in class jotters and assessments. In the majority of senior classes, young people receive feedback on their performance in assessments which helps them to plan their next steps in learning. This practice should now be extended across all stages to ensure that all young people are more aware of their next steps and can take responsibility for their own learning.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers employ digital technology through the use of computers and projectors. In a few classes, the use of video clips and mobile devices is enhancing learners' experiences. There are considerable opportunities for teachers to be more creative with the use of digital technology within the school. However, in some classes out-dated digital technology is impacting negatively on opportunities to support this. Young people are able to access electronic materials through web-based digital platforms and indicate that this is supporting them with their learning. There is scope to enhance this through further development of the use of Glow within the school. Plans to update the school website to contain relevant information which supports young people and their parents with their learning are at the early stages of development.
- The school has not yet developed approaches to interdisciplinary learning. As it moves forward with this, staff should ensure they plan effective learning opportunities for young people to develop a range of skills and apply them in new and unfamiliar contexts across the curriculum.
- The new HT's recent focus on sharing relevant data with staff is developing their understanding of the socio-economic barriers to learning that some young people face. As a result, there is an increasing awareness of the need to develop approaches to planning that ensure equity and address the needs of all young people. Young people experience a range of outdoor learning experiences. This includes local, national and international trips. With improved knowledge of the socio-economic context of the school community, staff are now better placed to take proactive steps to ensure all young people have equity of opportunity to participate in all wider learning experiences.
- Most departments are beginning to engage with the National Benchmarks to support assessment and to develop the robustness of their professional judgements.
- Staff across the school currently use a limited range of assessments throughout the year to monitor young people's progress. Staff should develop a wider range of assessment strategies to support the needs of all learners. This should include using assessment to inform and plan the next steps in learning for all young people. Recent Insight senior phase attainment reviews across all departments are providing a robust opportunity for staff to explore trends in attainment for different groups of young people, including those facing barriers to their learning. These reviews allow departments to reflect on their strengths and next steps in planning. The school should consider how this recent practice could be developed further to include such reflection of attainment data at the broad, general education (BGE).

- A significant number of staff are involved in marking and verifying assessments with the SQA. They use the skills developed through these activities to share an understanding of national assessment standards within their department. A few departments are involved in moderation activities within and outwith the school. Staff throughout the school are at an early stage of developing their understanding of standards at the BGE with moderation as a process. There is scope to develop areas of existing practice to support more effective moderation activities. There is scope also to ensure a consistent approach to assessment, and planning across the school.
- The school should continue with its plans, at pace, to develop a system to track and monitor young people's attainment at a whole school level in the early years of secondary school. The school has not developed a consistent approach to planning and tracking young people's progress at departmental level. As a result, there is not yet sufficient clarity of young people's progress in their learning across curricular areas. Young people at S1 and S2 are not yet clear on the levels at which they are working or the progress they are making in their learning.
- The school is using a tracking and monitoring system across the school in the senior phase. There is scope for staff to use this information more extensively to support and challenge young people in learning conversations. In the senior phase young people are aware of the levels they are working at based on National Qualifications. Young people receive a working and target grade. There is scope to build on this, based on best practice within the school, to ensure consistency of approach in agreeing targets with young people. Staff should continue to develop the use of learning conversations to ensure young people can plan next steps and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers report on learners' progress to parents at set times across the academic year. From S1 to S3 these written reports focus on the work covered and next steps. Staff should continue to develop these reports to ensure they provide young people and parents with a clear understanding of the skills young people are gaining and their main next steps in learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning Pathways

- The school is committed to improving its curriculum so that it offers an increasing range of flexible learning pathways to meet the needs and aspirations of all learners, and raise attainment. Particular areas of focus in the 2017-18 school improvement plan are: a clear rationale for the BGE in S1 to S3; links to the local community to ensure relevance in learning; clear progression routes; an increased emphasis in vocational options; and outdoor learning.
- The school works effectively with its associated primary schools, with the aim of ensuring progression in learning across a range of curriculum areas including literacy; numeracy; health and wellbeing; and STEM subjects. Primary school headteachers spoke positively about how they collaborate with Balwearie High School through cluster planning meetings, and a range of engagements involving primary and secondary teachers, as well as Balwearie pupils working with primary children in areas such as sport and STEM. There are plans to strengthen the moderation of standards in literacy and numeracy across the cluster using the Curriculum for Excellence National Benchmarks.
- The school is strongly committed to providing personalisation and choice for young people in S2 through 'major' and 'minor' options in expressive arts and technologies; and an extensive range of 'electives'. Staff have recognised the need to link the content of the electives more closely to Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes, and Benchmarks. This will ensure that the electives take better account of young people's prior learning, and that young people make suitable progress. We have asked the school to ensure that young people's major, minor and elective choices do not lead to a lack of breadth in their curriculum. This is the case for a few young people under the current arrangements.
- Across the school, the inspection team observed young people in S3 doing work specifically linked to National Qualifications. As the school creates its revised rationale for the BGE in S1 to S3, it should recognise that the current early focus on preparation for National Qualifications will lead to a narrowing of learning experiences within curriculum areas, and a lack of flexible options as young people move into the senior phase.
- The school is using PEF to provide new curriculum pathways for young people at risk of disengaging from education (referred to as BRAG, the Balwearie Raising Attainment Group). This work involves young people from S1 to S5 and includes rural studies, through which pupils are improving the school grounds, and a range of courses to develop confidence and resilience.
- A number of other curriculum pathways aim to meet the needs of particular groups of learners, including a special literacy programme for some young people in S1 and a time-limited bespoke Positive Destinations Group who are following a Fife-recognised approved, flexible pathway.
- In the senior phase, the school is providing a growing range of curriculum pathways through partnerships and links with Fife College. Through the Career Ready programme, young people are gaining work experience opportunities with employers and improving their employability skills.

- Pupils have access to clear guidance on available course options in the course choice booklets. However, the information does not consistently identify all available progression routes, or the range of possible employment opportunities that link to each subject. The S5/S6 course choice booklet uses the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) well to demonstrate to pupils the equivalence between school-based qualifications and those undertaken in college such as Foundation Apprenticeships.
- Balwearie High School works well with Fife College to offer a range of vocational opportunities to pupils in the senior phase at SCQF level 4 to 6. In the current session, there are nineteen young people attending Fife College through the School/College Partnership. The implementation and uptake of SDS Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) is at an early stage across Fife. Eighteen of the current S5 cohort within Balwearie High School are participating in FAs in business skills, engineering, civil engineering, scientific technologies and social services. In addition, opportunities have recently been introduced for small numbers of young people to gain qualifications in early education and childcare, hair and beauty, higher psychology, retail, and construction.
- The SDS careers advisers provide pupils with support to develop their Career Management Skills (CMS) through the delivery of the school partnership agreement (SPA). This includes useful group-work sessions and one-to-one interviews. These arrangements are designed to help young people make informed choices about their next steps to further learning or employment. However, in general, young people have a limited awareness and understanding of routes to employment. Pupils do not have sufficient awareness of their CMS and how these will help them to enter and sustain a positive destination. The school has recently introduced a 'My World of Work' Ambassador programme. Although at an early stage, this is helping pupils from S1 to S3 to access this important resource and build awareness of how it can help them to make decisions and choices about their future.
- Attractive posters showing the Balwearie Skills Framework are displayed across the school. Literacy and numeracy are included in the Balwearie Skills Framework. Departments should work with young people to develop an understanding of how key literacy and numeracy skills will help them to succeed in life and work beyond school. Staff have recognised the need to ensure the skills framework is referred to more clearly and regularly in lessons across the school.
- There is a need to ensure consistency across curricular areas in approaches to the development of young people's literacy skills. This work should reflect the proposals of the school's Literacy Across Learning initiative. Building on existing practices, there is scope for departments to identify better the key aspects of literacy that contribute to attainment in specific subject areas. Developing whole-school approaches to teaching and learning in these aspects will help young people to attain more highly.
- The school has recently revised the structure and remit of the numeracy group. Staff have undertaken analysis of young people's performance in numeracy and are actively targeting groups of young people for interventions. The numeracy committee is at the early stages of revisiting numeracy experiences across the curriculum. Plans to review learning and teaching approaches and the development of a shared understanding of numeracy standards will help create a consistent approach to developing young people's numeracy skills across the school.

- A working group has been established to develop skills for work and learning pathways in the hospitality sector but this is at an early stage.
- School senior leaders work well with SDS staff to negotiate and agree the content of the SPA and targets for delivery of careers guidance. The SDS SPA includes an appropriate range of activities to ensure that the Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) service offer is delivered to all year groups. Good progress is being made towards achievement of the service delivery targets for 2017/18. However, to date, the school has not yet taken up the offer from SDS to deliver career long professional learning (CLPL) to staff to raise awareness of key aspects of the development of CMS and skills for employability.
- Work with employers is limited, for example the Department of Additional Support (DAS) unit working with a “furnishing service”. There are some examples of employers attending sessions within the school to promote apprenticeships for example, within the technologies department. There is insufficient engagement with employers across the curriculum and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is not supported well as a result.
- School staff work well with the SDS career coach to ensure that all pupils receive CIAG services. The SDS career coach provides both universal and tailored support to pupils based on need. The school benefits from the services of an SDS careers adviser to support pupils who are hardest to reach, or who have disengaged from school, to progress to positive destination.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners - Parental Engagement

- The school recognises that it needs to build on existing links to engage parents more effectively in the life of the school and in supporting young people's learning. Parents who responded to the Education Scotland pre-inspection questionnaire report that they would welcome more helpful feedback about how their child is learning and how to support their learning at home.
- There is no Parent Council and no such parental body has existed in recent years at Balwearie High School. The long-standing Parent Education Group (PEG) currently has no chair. A member of the inspection team met a representative of the group. PEG's current priority is to engage a greater number, and a wider diversity of parents in its work to support the school. There has been a great deal of parental engagement in previous sessions on specific issues, for example, when the timetable changed to 33 periods, and when new National Qualifications were introduced. There has been less engagement more recently.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

weak

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

Wellbeing

- Relationships across the school are generally positive and respectful. In the pre-inspection questionnaire the majority of young people agree or strongly agree that staff treat them fairly and with respect and most young people say they are encouraged by staff to do the best they can. The HT and staff show commitment to improving outcomes for young people.
- The school is in the very early stages of developing a shared understanding of wellbeing amongst young people, staff, parents and partners. The wellbeing indicators are not yet being used consistently to support young people. There is significant scope for the school to raise the profile of the wellbeing indicators and to use them to track and monitor young people's progress more consistently, as well as to inform planning.
- In the pre-inspection questionnaire, most young people agree or strongly agree they have an adult with whom they can speak if they are upset or worried about something. However, in the pre-inspection questionnaires and during the inspection, a significant number of young people expressed the view that they do not feel safe in the school or in the school grounds. They are concerned about bullying, as well as the ways in which teachers respond to young people's concerns about bullying. Young people feel bullying incidents are frequent and not dealt with timeously or effectively. They also feel that incidents of misbehaviour are not dealt with consistently. Senior leaders should work closely with staff to ensure all young people are supported well and consistently.
- Action needs to be taken to ensure the school building is secure and provides a safe environment for young people and staff. Young people told us that increased staff presence around the school building would reassure them of the school's commitment to their wellbeing. Many young people told us about the negative impact that the "old and tired building" has on their environment for learning and on their morale and wellbeing. They have creative ideas as to how the environment could be made more welcoming and stimulating for them. Engaging pupil voice in such a project would be helpful in improving ethos and wellbeing.
- There are various examples in the school of where young people's wellbeing needs are being met well. Young people are given opportunities to succeed through their participation in clubs, activities and school trips. These include activities in the physical education and music departments. Pupils are also encouraged to develop leadership skills through buddying younger pupils or being members of the pupil leadership team.

- The school should develop ways to enable young people to share their views. Most young people spoken to during the inspection say their views are not taken fully into account.
- The school is in the process of reviewing its social education programme to improve outcomes for young people. In particular, teachers are aware of the need to update coursework linked to relationships and sexual health. The school should continue to consider ways to make the content and delivery of social education more engaging for all young people, using the skills and expertise of a wide range of partners as appropriate.

Fulfilment of statutory duties

- The school must ensure that all policies and procedures meet current legislative requirements. Procedures around Looked After Children should be reviewed as a matter of priority to ensure that all young people's needs are being identified and monitored in a consistent and rigorous manner.
- Senior leaders recognise the need to develop more robust systems and processes around the monitoring of young people's attendance and late-coming. There is considerable scope for the staff to communicate more effectively with one another, through the school's electronic tracking system (SEEMIS), and with parents. Processes should be kept under review to ensure they are being used consistently and to good effect to meet the needs of all children and their families. The school should continue to work closely with the attendance support officer, ensuring timeous information is shared to ensure young people's wellbeing and safety.
- Almost all staff undertake training to enable them to understand and implement approaches to keeping children safe. Child protection policies take account of the recently revised guidance from the education authority. However staff should ensure they implement all aspects of the policy, including the recording of concerns, involvement of other agencies, outcomes of child protection referrals, and support offered to young people. Staff need to improve their recording of child protection and safeguarding issues to ensure these provide appropriate and detailed information.
- In line with national expectations, the school meets its responsibility to provide continuous, progressive and meaningful high-quality religious and moral education (RME) for all young people in S1-S6.
- Improvements should be made to the provision of food and drinks in the school to ensure all aspects of the Health Promotion and Nutrition Act are being met. The school should review its arrangements for lunch provision in light of concerns expressed by young people. For example, young people report they have to queue up for long periods of time frequently and they have difficulty in getting lunch at times.

Inclusion and equality

- The school encourages and provides opportunities for groups of young people to feel valued and included.
- The school has approaches in place to identify young people who require additional support with their learning. The pupil support team are committed to ensuring young people receive appropriate support to help them attain and achieve success. Young people are able to identify how they benefit from the support they receive. The school now

needs to improve its approaches to meeting the needs of young people, to ensure they attain as highly as possible and have their wellbeing needs met. The school should consider how a staged intervention approach, when introduced, could be used to enable staff to identify specific needs and provide targeted interventions more effectively. Teachers need to improve approaches to tracking and monitoring the progress and attainment of young people with additional support needs, and subject teachers should take better account of the needs of young people in planning and delivering learning and teaching. The school should also keep its range of supports and interventions under review to ensure it meets the needs of all young people, such as those of young people for whom English is an additional language. More strategic approaches should be taken to evaluate their effectiveness.

- The school needs to take a more strategic approach to the management and leadership of individual support plans (ISPs) and child's plans to ensure that young people's needs are identified, reviewed and met more consistently across the guidance team. Guidance teachers know their young people well. However, systems and structures need to be developed now to enable all young people to benefit from consistently high-quality experiences in the school.
- The school recognises the needs of some young people who have difficulty engaging with their learning. A pilot project to provide flexible learning packages has resulted in a few young people participating in part-time education, in school and in other contexts. Individual plans and packages should be reviewed more regularly to support young people to return to full-time education in a planned and structured way. Young people who attend the pupil support department for periods of time should also have a clear understanding of, and input to, arrangements for their re-integration into mainstream classes.
- The school is at the early stages of planning targeted interventions for groups of young people through the BRAG. Learners are being given opportunities to participate in a range of exciting projects such as boxing, Creative Growth, Our Minds Matter, rural skills and RISE (Resilience building Involving Self Esteem). These projects seek to improve young people's skills and confidence, as well as reduce their stress and anxiety.
- Young people in the LGBT group speak positively about the way in which almost all teachers are supportive and encouraging. They also value being given opportunities to speak at school assemblies. The school should continue to seek the views of all young people in reviewing aspects of the social education programme to ensure a fully inclusive ethos across the school. The school should continue to work with this group of young people and others to ensure that approaches are inclusive, barriers are removed and young people feel safe and secure at all times and can fully access the curriculum.
- The school should review its practices linked to the ISH (individualised support hub) to ensure the on-going wellbeing of both staff and pupils. In addition, practices related to financial aspects of school activity for families should be reviewed to ensure equity of experience.

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 numeracy in the BGE

- The school provided data for young people's attainment in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3 for the latest two years. The data shows that the school considers that:
 - By June 2016 most young people had achieved third Curriculum for Excellence level in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy by the end of S3.
 - By June 2017 almost all young people had achieved third Curriculum for Excellence level in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy with the majority achieving fourth Curriculum for Excellence level in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy.The reliability of the data is uncertain. Teachers are still developing confidence in making accurate and robust professional judgement regarding achievement of a level and, as this improves, data will become more reliable over time.

The school is yet to put in place robust systems to collate attainment data in literacy and numeracy for cohorts as they move from entry into S1, through the BGE and not just at the end point of S3. When established, this should enable progress of cohorts, groups and individuals to be better monitored and tracked on an on-going basis. It should also support provision of appropriate learning pathways for all and therefore help to support the raising attainment and closing the gap agenda. This will help the school to evaluate added value from P7 to S3.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy in the senior phase

- **Leavers:** There are no obvious trends for the proportions of leavers achieving an award in literacy and numeracy at any SCQF level over the latest five years and overall these have been in line with the virtual comparator (VC). In the latest year, the proportion of leavers achieving literacy at SCQF Level 3 or better, 4 or better through course award, and 5 or better through units was significantly lower than the VC. Indeed, the proportions of leavers achieving an award in literacy at SCQF Level 5 or better through units alone has been significantly lower than the VC in three out of the latest five years. The proportion of leavers at the end of S4 achieving a numeracy award at SCQF Level 3 or better has been significantly lower than the VC in three out of the latest five years. The school recognises that it needs to have a stronger focus on ensuring all young people as far as possible achieve an award in literacy and numeracy before they leave school.
- In S4, overall the proportions achieving a literacy award across all SCQF levels has been in line with the VC in the latest five years. In the latest year, the proportion achieving SCQF

Level 5 or better was significantly higher than the VC. The proportions achieving a literacy award at SCQF level 5 or better over the latest 5 years has been significantly improving. The proportions achieving a numeracy award across SCQF levels has overall been in line with the VC in the latest five years. The proportions achieving a numeracy award at SCQF Level 5 or better through units only has been significantly improving in recent years.

- By S5, the proportions achieving a literacy award at all SCQF levels is overall in line with the VC with the exception of 2015/16 with SCQF Level 3 or better, SCQF Level 4 or better through course award, and SCQF Level 5 or better through units all being significantly lower than VC. The proportions achieving a numeracy award by S5 across SCQF levels has overall been in line with the VC in the latest five years.
- By S6, the proportions achieving a literacy award at all SCQF levels is overall in line with the VC with the exception of 2016/17 where all measures except SCQF Level 6 are either lower or much lower than the VC. The proportions achieving a numeracy award by S6 across SCQF levels has overall been in line with the VC in the latest five years.

Attainment over time

- **BGE:** To varying degrees of effectiveness, progress over time for individuals and class groups in the BGE is tracked at department level in each of the subject areas. As yet, this is not collated at a whole-school level and therefore not yet used as an effective means to raise attainment. The school recognises that it has more work to do to enable the collation of robust data on attainment at the BGE. To improve the reliability of data, teachers should collaborate more with colleagues from across schools in Fife and beyond, and different sectors to develop further their understanding of the standards involved in achieving a level within their subjects.
- **Leavers:** Attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers (as shown by the average complementary tariff scores) has either been below or significantly lower than those of the VC in each of the latest five years. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% of leavers has been in line with the VC in the latest 5 years. Attainment of the highest attaining 20% of leavers (as shown by the average complementary tariff scores) has either been above or significantly higher than those of the VC in each of the latest five years.
- **Cohorts:** In the latest five years, there are no obvious trends and the attainment of young people at S4, S5 and S6 (as measured by their complementary tariff scores) has been overall in line with the VC.

Breadth and Depth

- At S4, the proportions of young people achieving 1 or more to 7 or more awards at SCQF Level 3 or better and SCQF Level 4 or better is in line with the VC. The proportions of young people achieving 1 or more to 7 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 at Grade C or better and Grade A or better has overall been in line with the VC. Exceptions have been in 2016/17 with proportions achieving 2 or more to 6 or more at Grade C or better being significantly higher than the VC and the proportion achieving of 2 or more at Grade A or better in this year also being significantly higher than the VC. The proportions at S4 achieving 3 or more to 6 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or better at Grade C or better has been significantly improving over the last five years. The proportions at S4 achieving 1 or more to 3 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or better at Grade A or better has been significantly improving over the last five years.

- By S5, the proportions of young people achieving 1 or more to 4 or more awards at SCQF Level 3 or better or 4 or better has appeared at times to be significantly lower than the VC, but generally it is in line with the VC over the latest five years. The proportions achieving awards at SCQF Level 6 by S5 is in line with the VC across all measures.
- By S6, the proportions of young people achieving 1 or more to 4 or more awards at SCQF Level 3 or better has more often than not been significantly lower than the VC. The proportion of young people achieving awards at SCQF Level 6 is overall in line with the VC across all measures. The proportions of young people achieving 1 or more to 3 or more awards at SCQF level 7 is almost always in line with the VCE in the latest five years with occasional being significantly higher than the VC.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people are accessing a range of achievement opportunities across all stages. The opportunities are particularly notable at the upper stages.
- Young people have many opportunities to develop physical fitness and further develop personal interests through taking part in a range of sporting clubs or activities on offer. For example, a Rugby Development Officer has been working with the school over the past three years with a few young people have gained basic coaching certificates. The Active Schools programme is enabling young people to achieve Community Sports Leader and Dance Leader Awards and to volunteer as Active Schools Ambassadors. As a result young people are developing confidence and skills. There are a few examples of young people progressing into further and higher education as a result of their interest in developing as coaches and sports leaders. The Active Schools coordinator has undertaken some analysis of patterns of participation in the Active Schools Programme including mapping participation in after school activities levels in the primary cluster schools. There is scope to build on this analysis in Balwearie and to extend this approach to other aspects of achievement. Many young people have developed their personal interest and musical skills through musical theatre opportunities at Balwearie. For example, there is a high profile school show production every two years which involves many young people in varying roles. This develops a sense of teamwork across those involved.
- The school offers a range of programmes which enable young people to develop leadership and citizenship skills, particularly in S5 and S6. For example, links to a school in Capetown are well established with regular fundraising initiatives resulting in an annual visit for a selected group of young people. The school has recently introduced a prefect leadership system with seventy young people at S6 developing their leadership skills through taking on roles as prefects with a few young people also taking on head and depute head prefect roles. Young people are developing leadership opportunities and having them recognised in a variety of other ways including through the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards (both and Bronze and Silver Level), Balwearie Leadership Award, World Challenge and Erasmus.
- Young people across the school demonstrate a caring attitude towards other through fundraising. Some young people who spoke with inspectors valued the opportunities they had to volunteer and engage in fundraising in the community including , for example contributing to a local Food Bank. A few young people are gaining Saltire accreditation for their volunteering work.

- The school captures and celebrates achievements in a range of ways such as extending the range of certification – Ulysses award, SEEMIS merits, press articles etc. As yet, the school is not effectively tracking and monitoring these achievements and linking them to the development of skills. As a result, young people are not able to clearly articulate the skills that they are developing from their experiences. There is scope to improve dialogue with young people on the skills they are developing through their achievement. Developing profiles of achievement could enable young people to better articulate their learning and skills across settings. The school recognises this and is exploring how it will move forward with this.
- Overall, too little is currently known about patterns of participation, levels of accreditation and certification. As a result the school does not yet have a clear picture of those at risk of missing out through taking part in few or no after school learning opportunities.
- The school recognised that there is considerable scope to take a more planned and strategic approach to achievement across stages including extending and developing opportunities in non-SQA award bearing programmes. The school is currently addressing this through the improvement plan.

Equity for all learners

- Attainment versus deprivation: The attainment of leavers (as shown by complementary tariff score) residing in the area designated as SIMD 3 has been significantly improving over the latest five years). The attainment of S6 young people who live in SIMD 9 as a proportion of the S6 cohort (not the S4 cohort) has been significantly improving over the latest five years.
- Almost all young people have stayed on at school from S4 to S5 in four out of last five years (exception was 2014/15 which was 88%). In three out of five of these years the proportions were significantly higher than the VC. The staying on rates from S5 to S6 have been in line with the VC in the latest three years being significantly higher than the VC in the two years preceding this. The proportions leaving S5 to go to higher education have been in line with the VC in the latest five years. The proportions moving on to higher education following S6 have been significantly higher than the VC in four out of the latest five years. However, in 2011/12 and 2014/15 the proportions moving on from S6 to a positive destination was significantly lower than the VC.
- In the latest four years almost all young people who have left school have moved on to a positive destination such as college, higher education or employment. With the exception of the latest year, the proportions moving on to higher education have been significantly higher than the VC over recent years. The proportions moving on to employment has been significantly improving over the latest five years. They had been significantly lower than the VC but have been in line with the VC since 2014/15.
- The exclusion levels have been much higher than the national average in the latest five years at Balwearie High School. In recent months there has been a significant reduction in the levels of exclusions. The school has been reviewing approaches to alternatives to exclusions and continues to do so.
- On average, in the last three years, young people in S6 at Balwearie HS have taken fewer SQA courses than pupils nationally. There is scope to ensure that young people use the time they are not doing courses to develop attributes and skills further which will serve

them well for life beyond school and help them move to sustained positive destinations. The school should develop with young people and parents a clear rationale about the purpose of S6 for different groups of learners.

- The school is keen for all young people to experience equality of opportunity in achievements and has redesigned the awards ceremony and introduced a 'General Excellence Award' with this in mind. A recently formed Recognising Achievement working group is supporting the excellence and equity agenda through their work.
- The BRAG which is funded through PEF is an important step to improving the coordination, planning and targeting of learning opportunities to promote achievement.

School choice of QI : 1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement

- Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation
- Analysis and evaluation of intelligence and data
- Impact on learners' successes and achievements

- Across the school teachers appreciate the need for effective self-evaluation in order to improve professional practice and achieve better outcomes for all learners. Sources of evidence used for self-evaluation have been limited although they have recently been augmented by the more focused use of data analysis using the *Insight* school improvement tool. This is helpfully adding to the intelligence teachers have been collecting through their analysis of how young people perform in their learning. The school now needs to develop more effective processes to engage young people, their parents and partners in supporting self-evaluation. Teachers should ensure that self-evaluation takes account of a balance of evidence from several sources, including performance data.
- A range of groups, involving all staff, is taking forward improvements in the work of the school. The senior leadership team must ensure that there is a clear strategic overview of the work of these groups so that improvement activities are purposeful and manageable. Consideration should be given to evaluating the relative effectiveness of different improvement activities so that staff can prioritise their efforts on those activities for which there is evidence of greatest impact. A quality assurance group has recently been established in the school to develop policy and practice in this area. It will be important to ensure that all staff and stakeholders have effective ways to contribute to this.
- While the school has processes to support class observation and professional learning, it is not clear how these are leading to improvements in professional practice in learning and teaching. Senior leaders need to ensure that there is a strategic approach to class observation which is more evaluative and focused on developing and sharing best practice. The school should develop an approach to improving professional practice in learning and teaching which identifies a clear role for principal teachers in securing improvements and ensuring that they impact positively on outcomes for all young people. There are a few examples of teachers identifying good practice in schools locally and nationally which can inform their professional learning. There is scope to develop a more systematic approach to this so that more teachers have regular opportunities to extend their practice and engage in collaborative professional learning.
- Staff demonstrate an increasing awareness of factors that affect young people's learning and are starting to take these into account when analysing curricular provision. While this is leading to an enhanced curriculum offer for some targeted young people there is scope to consider a wider analysis of curricular provision to ensure that the needs of all young people are met.

Context

Leadership of change

- Staff in the Department of Additional Support (DAS) are committed to ensuring young people achieve success and have opportunities to learn and develop within a range of contexts. They work collaboratively with subject teachers to identify opportunities for young people to learn in the mainstream setting and there is a clear focus on preparing young people for life beyond school. Partnership working within the local and wider community is helping staff achieve their aims for young people through opportunities for work experience, volunteering and attending college. There is a wide range of opportunities for young people to learn outwith the school through residential and other outings.
- Principal teachers in the DAS are committed to continuous improvement and can identify the positive impact of recent changes in areas such as ethos, teaching and learning and attainment in National Qualifications. Staff should continue with their improvement agenda ensuring parents and young people are fully included in identifying and taking forward priorities. Staff in the DAS, together with the school SLT should implement robust monitoring and quality assurances processes to measure the impact of improvement priorities and ensure they lead to better outcomes for young people.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- Young people in the DAS are motivated and engaged in their learning. They benefit from positive relationships with staff and with each other. Where appropriate, young people access learning with their mainstream peers and this enables them to learn within contexts that provide challenge and lead to accreditation in specific subjects. Young people would benefit from more active learning, including opportunities that offer more challenge. The department should consider how they could make better use of digital technology to enhance learning. Young people have opportunities to contribute to the life of the school through partnership working with mainstream pupils and leadership roles such as prefects.
- Staff in the DAS have a good understanding of the individual strengths and support needs of young people. In a few lessons, teaching approaches take account of individual needs and provide young people with good opportunities to learn collaboratively. Some lessons are too teacher led with limited opportunities for young people to contribute their ideas or views.
- Staff in the DAS have accurately identified the need to further develop assessment approaches. Currently, assessment is mainly focussed on achievements of targets or National Qualifications. Young people need to be more involved in assessing their own learning and identifying what they need to do to improve. Staff are at an early stage of developing approaches to tracking and monitoring progress.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Staff take good account of the wellbeing needs of young people in the DAS and as a result, young people are confident and happy. Staff use information well to develop individual plans that enable young people and staff to identify specific learning targets. Staff should ensure that targets are specific with clear measures of success that enable

them to identify what has been achieved and next steps for learning. The needs of young people are appropriately identified within the context of the wellbeing indicators and this results in a holistic plan that takes account of their social, emotional and learning needs.

- Young people are developing positive relationship with peers, in both the DAS and the mainstream school, through opportunities for learning and socialisation in both contexts.
- DAS pupils are benefitting from collaboration with a range of partners who contribute to meeting their wellbeing needs. Young people are able to participate in sports such as swimming, curling, cycling and compete in games with other young people across Fife. Young people are volunteering within their community and participating in work placements. As a result they are developing confidence and skills that will help prepare them for independence and life beyond school.
- Staff in the DAS work effectively with partners, parents and young people at times of transition. Together with voluntary organisations and colleges, they consider the wellbeing needs of young people and their aspirations for the future. Young people's views are sought and valued in identifying their future destination. As a result almost all young people experience a positive transition to college or placement.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Most young people in the DAS are working at an appropriate level within the broad general education. Curriculum for Excellence levels that young people are working within take account of their strengths and needs. However, there is scope to improve young people's attainment within the broad general education through more robust assessment approaches and improved tracking and monitoring. Staff would benefit from additional professional learning related to planning across levels for young people, ensuring that they take better account of all Curriculum for Excellence levels. This is particularly notable in planning for the development of young people's literacy skills.
- Young people in the DAS are attaining across a range of subjects in National Qualifications. These qualifications are enabling young people to develop skills for life beyond school such as preparing for employment and applications of mathematics. Currently, all young people broadly follow the same senior phase pathway with limited opportunities for personalisation and choice. Staff now need to ensure that young people are receiving their entitlement to make informed choices about their programmes and courses in the senior phase. Almost all young people move to positive destinations after 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.

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