

Summarised inspection findings

Dalry Secondary School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

10 March 2020

School name: Dalry Secondary School
Council: Dumfries and Galloway Council
SEED number: 5918332
Roll (Sep 2018): 44

Key contextual information

Dalry Secondary School is an S1 to S4, non-denominational secondary school in the town of Dalry. The school has three associated primary schools. The headteacher has been in post for just under two years. He is supported by a School Support Manager and three deputy headteachers. Together, they also form the senior leadership team at Castle Douglas High School located 17 miles from Dalry.

Attendance is generally above the national average. Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In February 2019 24 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2018 2 per cent of pupils live in 20 per cent most deprived datazones in Scotland.

In September 2018 the school reported that 25 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

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 enjoy learning at school. Relationships are positive across all classrooms, and almost all young people treat one another fairly and respectfully. The majority of young people are engaged in their learning and work at an appropriate pace and level of challenge in class. A minority of young people are too passive in their learning and would benefit from being given increased challenge. A few young people would also benefit from receiving increased support, using materials which are suited well to their needs.
- In most classes, teachers share the purpose of learning with young people. This is beginning to help young people focus on their learning more effectively. In the majority of classes, teachers also help young people understand how they can achieve success in their learning. A few teachers identify the purpose of young people's learning and share strategies for success with them. Most young people appreciate when they have the opportunity to influence what and how they learn.
- Teachers know all young people well as individuals. They provide effective one-to-one support in most classes and encourage young people to do their best. They use verbal feedback and praise appropriately. This is having a positive effect on most young people's confidence and self-esteem. A next step for the school will be to improve teachers' use of written feedback to support further young people's learning.

- The quality of teaching is too variable across the school. Whilst almost all teachers give clear instructions, the majority of lessons are too teacher led. In a few classes, teachers enable young people to learn more creatively, encouraging them to engage in activities that are more active and involve structured dialogue with their peers. Young people enjoy learning in this way. A few teachers demonstrate skill in using questioning to support young people's learning. This is not yet consistent across the school.
- Teachers make appropriate use of digital technologies in a few classes to support young people's learning. Young people use these to engage in activities such as research and coding.
- Teachers provide opportunities for young people to learn actively through the Wider Achievement Activities. Young people enjoy these, in particular the ways in which they enable them to develop new skills. Staff need to develop a better understanding of the skills young people are developing at these times to help young people build progressively on their learning and ongoing success.
- Teachers are in the very early stages of developing a learning and teaching policy for use across the Castle Douglas and Dalry Partnership. Teachers from the Partnership have also been involved in creating a learning and teaching observation policy. Staff from Dalry Secondary School are about to be consulted on this policy. These policies should help senior leaders and staff develop a better overview of practice across the school and lead, over time, to more consistent high quality practice to raise attainment.
- Most staff use summative assessments well to confirm and support young people's attainment and progress in learning. They use other types of assessment less frequently. Teachers need to extend the range of assessments they use, including self and peer, to ensure young people have opportunities to demonstrate their skills and understanding. This should also support improvements in the validity and reliability of assessment data.
- Staff have participated in some professional learning associated with moderation. This has included working with primary colleagues to discuss achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy. Teachers have also participated in moderation work with secondary colleagues in a few subject areas. All teachers need to engage more frequently now in similar activities across the Partnership. This should help develop further their confidence in applying national standards and engaging fully with different types of moderation.
- Most staff are using experiences and outcomes to support planning for lessons. They are also beginning to use a new planning sheet that has been introduced across the school to improve consistency in planning. The majority of teachers are using National Benchmarks to plan assessments. Middle leaders should ensure all staff employ National Benchmarks more consistently to help improve the reliability of teachers' professional judgement. Currently, young people have a limited role in planning their learning. A next step for staff will be to consider how to include young people more fully. This should help young people to have greater ownership of their learning.
- Senior and middle leaders have developed a new approach to monitoring and tracking young people's attainment. Through this approach, young people are beginning to engage in learner conversations with teachers. They are also completing tracking booklets, which record their targets and areas for development. Young people are developing their confidence in identifying their progress within a level. Leaders need to ensure all teachers conduct learning conversations across all curricular areas. They also need to ensure young people use tracking booklets more consistently to deepen their understanding and ensure any barriers to learning

are addressed. A next step for the school would be to continue to improve ways of providing regular feedback to parents about young people's progress.

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

- As the number of young people in each school year is small, care has been taken when interpreting and analysing data. In order not to identify any of the small number of young people taking qualifications, HM Inspectors have not always used qualitative terms.

Broad general education (BGE)

- In 2019, CfE data based on teacher professional judgement indicates that all young people achieved third level or better in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. A minority of young people achieved literacy at fourth level or better, with a majority achieving numeracy at this level by the end of S3. Teachers' judgements of CfE levels require further development and ongoing moderation to ensure attainment data in the BGE is reliable. The use of Scottish National Standardised Assessments and the work with Castle Douglas and Dalry Partnership is at an early stage and is supporting staff with their understanding of standards.

Attainment over time

BGE

- The recent introduction of the local authority monitoring and tracking tool is enabling staff to review progress across all curriculum areas for young people in S1 to S3. Teachers, alongside senior leaders, have an important role to play in working together to benchmark and agree approaches using the four-point scale to describe the progress of learners in the BGE. This has the potential to raise attainment and secure improved outcomes for young people.

Attainment over time

Senior phase

- By S4, the school has strong levels of attainment and young people perform consistently well in National Qualifications. Senior leaders, as planned, should continue the Partnership work to improve experiences and outcomes for all young people. For example, the recently introduced initiative to enable young people to access team sport activities in S4 PE classes. This is supporting improvements in their communication and team working skills.

Literacy and numeracy

- All young people leaving school from S4 over the past five years attained literacy at SCQF level 4 or better. With the exception of 17/18, all young people leaving school from S4 attained numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better. We discussed with senior leaders the need to develop further appropriate pathways enabling young people leaving school to attain SCQF level 5 or better in literacy and numeracy.

Breadth and depth

- In S4, over the past five years all young people attained four or more qualifications at SCQF level 4 or better with the exception of 17/18 where most attained this measure. Young people are also attaining well at SCQF level 5 or better and most are attaining two or more qualifications at this level.
- As part of the raising attainment strategy, senior leaders have restructured the BGE curriculum. This has reduced the number of young people withdrawing from subjects in S3 and has therefore improved subject uptake in S4. Also, senior leaders have sought to establish equity across all subject areas by allocating a consistent number of hours of learning for courses.
- Senior leaders use and analyse attainment data well to identify young people requiring further support in S4. Those requiring further support are assigned an attainment mentor. They have met their mentor once this session. Young people discuss their progress with their class teacher and mentor and update their senior phase tracking booklet. Senior leaders have plans for these meetings to take place termly.
- Approaches to recording progress and identifying areas for improvement in young people's tracking booklets are inconsistent. Senior leaders need to consider how to improve the consistency of this information. This has the potential to inform better their overview of all young people's progress. Senior leaders also need to work with mentors to review this approach to ensure that ambitious targets are set and steps are taken which raise attainment.
- Staff are using a range of data more rigorously to support decisions regarding presentation levels. This is beginning to lead to improved attainment for young people in S4. Staff use an improving evidence base to identify appropriate presentation levels. Senior leaders, as planned, should collaborate further with the Partnership to continue to identify appropriate pathways. These should provide all young people with the opportunity to maximise their attainment and meet their needs and aspirations.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Young people benefit from a range of lunchtime and after school clubs including table tennis, film and community choir. These activities enable them to develop their interests and social skills. A group of young people in S3 and S4 are developing resilience through the school's residential excursion to Millport. Shared activities and events with other local secondary schools, such as the 'Young Musician and Young Singer of the Year', increase young people's confidence. These activities assist in preparing young people for the transition to S5.
- All young people participate in Wider Achievement Activities (WAA) as part of their curriculum. Young people are encouraged to suggest possible WAA. Senior leaders and staff are continuing to seek opportunities which allow young people to gain accreditation for their WAA. Examples include the John Muir Award and a leadership award for S4 learners. Senior leaders recognise that WAA activities in class should clearly allow young people to demonstrate the development of their skills. This would give young people a better understanding of the skills they are developing across their learning experiences and their progression. Senior leaders should ensure that all young people benefit from opportunities to receive accreditation for their WAA.
- The school is beginning to track young people's participation in wider achievement. This should be extended to out of class activities.
- Almost all young people participated in the recent school pantomime which was produced in partnership with a local theatre company. Through this activity, young people gained a range

of skills from performance to learning how to plan and organise events. Young people's understanding of charity is developed by their fundraising activities. Established business links with a local employer support the development of young people's employability skills through curriculum vitae preparation and mock interviews. Young people speak very positively of this initiative. This is supported by their use of My World of Work.

- A few young people have opportunities to develop their leadership skills as pupil council representatives and house captains. All S4 learners are developing their leadership skills by adopting ambassador roles for the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) initiative. Senior leaders should seek more leadership opportunities for young people in S1 to S3. Staff recognise young people's achievements well through postcards and certificates, and celebrate them through assemblies and displays around the school.

Equity for all learners

- Almost all young people reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 5 and 6. Based on complementary tariff scores in S4, young people's attainment is in line or significantly higher than the national figure for SIMD 5 and 6.
- Senior leaders report that the SIMD profile does not fully reflect the socio-economic circumstances of young people due to the rural location. The school supports families well to ensure all young people can access a range of activities.
- Senior leaders use their allocation of Pupil Equity Funding to develop strategies to reduce barriers to learning. Senior leaders provided data demonstrating improvements in progress in literacy and numeracy for identified young people following targeted interventions. Currently, staffing for additional support is being financed by Pupil Equity Funding. Senior leaders are not in a position yet to demonstrate clearly the impact of this strategy. Senior leaders and staff need to continue to gather robust evidence on the impact of planned strategies and attainment outcomes for young people.
- Upon completion of S4, most young people attend other local secondary schools to continue their education in S5. Over the past five years, almost all young people leaving school after S4 have entered a positive destination. This is a result of the support offered by staff to young people and effective partnership working.

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.