

# Summarised inspection findings

Arran High School

North Ayrshire Council

16 June 2020

School name: Arran High School  
Council: North Ayrshire Council  
SEED number: 8200831  
Roll (Feb 20): 229

Attendance is generally above the national average. Exclusions are considerably below the national average. In February 2019, 6% of pupils were registered for free school meals. In September 2018, the school reported that 28% of pupils had additional support needs. No pupils live in 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.

## Key contextual information

Arran High School is a six year non-denominational secondary school situated in the village of Lamlash on the east coast of the island of Arran. It serves all the villages and surrounding areas of the island. There are challenges in both recruitment and retention of staff due to the island location. The Arran High School cluster group consists of the high school and its seven associated primaries from across the island. The senior leadership team comprises the headteacher and two deputy headteachers. They share responsibility for educational provision for children and young people aged 3-18, at the High School and Lamlash Primary School and Early Years Class. These are all located on the same campus. The majority of young people remain at school until S6.

### 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

- The school's values of ambition, belonging, compassion and trust are evident in the day-to-day relationships between young people and their teachers and among young people themselves. These positive, respectful relationships foster a calm and orderly learning environment.
- Young people engage well in their learning and with each other during activities. Most teachers make clear to young people the purpose of their learning. In the majority of lessons, young people have the opportunity to work together and direct their learning. However too many lessons are overly teacher led. This is leading to young people not always being actively engaged in their learning. Young people are keen to learn and are committed to their own successes and achievements. Teachers recognise this and are working well together to offer high-quality learning experiences. There is scope for the school to ensure that teaching is effective in meeting the needs of all learners and, in particular, that there is an appropriate level of challenge for all.
- Young people enjoy a wide range of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and community. This includes sports, music or events and activities which develop their sense of citizenship. The majority of young people feel staff take on board their views.

- The school's investment in teachers working together and using current educational thinking and research to improve learning for young people is commendable. As a result, in the majority of subjects, young people are becoming more aware of their next steps in learning. They know what they need to do to make further progress. They are also becoming more familiar with criteria which will enable them to produce work of higher quality. This is helping to raise their own expectations and supporting them in taking more responsibility for their own learning.
- Young people benefit from teachers working together to develop a shared language of learning across the school. This supports improvements in literacy skills and in particular, extended writing from young people. The school should proceed with its plans to develop further these approaches across the whole school, building on current progress. This should support increased consistency of high-quality experiences for all.
- There is a range of learning opportunities for young people to develop their creativity and critical thinking skills, for example through computer programming or electives. All young people would benefit from an increased range of opportunities which support innovation and creativity. The helpful focus on mapping out skills within the broad general education (BGE) will support staff in taking this forward.
- Young people are enthusiastic about the improved access to digital technology for classroom use. They also appreciate when teachers use digital platforms and programmes to support their learning at home. A range of factors regarding digital infrastructure limits access to digital solutions for staff networking and for supporting young people's learning using higher-quality digital resources.
- Most staff deploy a range of assessment tools and strategies to provide robust data on young people's progress at the BGE. Staff across almost all curricular areas are working well to improve their judgement of achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. This includes increasing confidence in using data literacy skills which support validation of professional judgements. They have made a positive start to developing a more robust understanding of the moderation of learning, teaching and assessment in the BGE. Teachers should focus on the moderation of course planning alongside recent approaches to developing pedagogy.
- Staff work effectively with colleagues in associated primary schools to agree shared expectations and standards of achievement of a CfE level in literacy and numeracy. They should now build on this strong foundation for other curricular areas. This will continue to enhance progression, challenge and expectations in learning for young people through the BGE.
- The school's monitoring and tracking system enables staff within subject departments to identify at the earliest stage young people who may be making limited progress. In the BGE, teachers are becoming more confident in monitoring young people's progress. In a few departments, staff are developing robust approaches to monitoring the progress of young people towards meeting their targets. In the most effective examples of practice, this informs subsequent changes to teachers' planning to meet learners' needs. As a next step, senior leaders should ensure that information on their progress and the interventions in place are available to all teachers. This will help teachers plan for improved connections across subjects.
- In the senior phase, teachers have a clear understanding of young people's progress when making assessment judgements. A significant majority of teachers carry out various national roles with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and helpfully share current thinking around national standards with other colleagues.

- Increasingly, there is a whole school focus on building skills development into course planning and assessment approaches. Staff should ensure that skills are more clearly defined.
- The whole-school approach to improving feedback to young people is effective. An improved whole school understanding of developing and monitoring progress should help to ensure that young people consistently receive high-quality feedback in all classes. Most young people value highly the feedback they receive. They would like it to be more consistent across subjects and, in some subjects, more frequent.
- The learning and teaching working group is well placed to support staff with an increased understanding of the relationship between learning, teaching, the use of assessment and planning, tracking and monitoring. This should support young people to make clearer connections across their learning, identify more easily their strengths and areas for improvement and help to develop more challenging programmes of 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

As the number of young people in each year group 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 quantitative terms.

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

##### BGE

- In 2019, almost all young people achieved third CfE level in both literacy and numeracy. The majority of young people achieved fourth level in literacy, with most doing so in numeracy. Percentages of young people achieving across all elements of literacy and numeracy are above both local authority and national figures for third and fourth levels.
- All staff work increasingly well together to develop a shared understanding of standards, engaging in moderation activities with others from both beyond and within the school. As a result, there is increased rigour in professional judgement. Senior leaders feel confident that the most recent data from 2019 is more robust. Effective partnership working with colleagues in the associated primary schools is strengthening a shared understanding of standards in literacy. The introduction of a reading skills development programme across the cluster is supporting a consistent approach to progression in literacy skills. Almost all young people participating in this programme have improved reading skills. Staff analyse data from a range of sources to identify appropriate strategies to support the school's clear focus on ensuring positive outcomes for learners. Senior leaders monitor and track young people's progress in their learning across the curriculum. Young people are known well as individuals. Extracted groups operate as a strategy for raising attainment. The school should keep this approach under review to ensure that young people's needs are met in an appropriately inclusive learning environment alongside their peers.

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

##### Senior phase

- Most young people have attained well in literacy and numeracy on leaving school. In 2016/17, all leavers attained SCQF level 5 or better in both literacy and numeracy. Most young people who left school in 2017/18 attained SCQF level 5 or better in both literacy and numeracy. All leavers in 2016/17 and 2017/18 who gained SCQF level 5 or better in literacy, gained this through a course award. In 2017/18, when leavers' attainment in literacy at SCQF levels 3 or better and 4 or better was significantly much lower than the VC, senior leaders provided evidence to confirm that all young people have achieved in a range of other courses.

## Attainment over time

- The school is well placed to ensure that continuing moderation activity results in improved robustness of data in all curricular areas, informing young people's progression in the BGE.
- Attainment in the senior phase is generally strong across most subjects and presentation levels. Between 2013 and 2017, the average complementary tariff scores for all leavers has shown improvement. With the exception of 17/18, the average complementary tariff scores for leavers, for both the lowest attaining 20% and middle 60%, have improved year-on-year since 13/14. The decline in 17/18 for the middle attaining 60% has scores now in line with the VC whereas they were significantly much higher in the year prior to this. Average complementary tariff scores for the highest attaining 20% of leavers have improved since 15/16 and were significantly much higher than the VC in 17/18.
- Percentage changes represent small shifts in numbers of young people due to the size of the school roll. Over the period from 15/16 to 17/18, the percentage of young people in S4 obtaining two or more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better was significantly higher and much higher than the VC. Between 2015 and 2017, the percentage of young people attaining three or more qualifications was significantly much higher than the VC, as it was for those who attained four qualifications or more in 16/17. In the most recent year, 18/19, there is a decline in the percentage of young people achieving one or more and two or more qualifications at this level. In 16/17, the percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 5A or better at one or more and two or more qualifications was significantly much higher than the VC. In the latest year, 18/19, the percentage of young people achieving qualifications at SCQF levels 5A or better and level 5C or better are in line with the VC. This reflects a move away from attainment being significantly higher than the VC earlier in the five-year period to being in line.
- In 18/19, almost all young people by S5 attained two or more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better. This was significantly much higher than the VC. There has been an increase in the percentages of young people attaining one or more to two or more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better by S5. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5A or better has declined. The quality of pass at SCQF level 5 has therefore declined from 2017 to 2019. Performance has moved to in line with the VC at SCQF level 5A or better since 2017/18 after a period of three years from 2014-17 when the percentage of young people attaining at this level was often significantly higher or much higher than the VC. By S5, attainment is significantly higher than the VC at SCQF level 6C or better at five or more courses in 2018/19. In 2017/18-19, the percentages of young people attaining at SCQF level 6C or better and level 6A or better is in line with the VC.
- By S6, over the past five years, the majority of young people go on to obtain three or more Highers. In three of the five years, most young people obtained one or more Higher at SCQF level 6C or better. These figures are in line with the VC in four of the five years and significantly much higher in 17/18. In 18/19, the percentages of young people attaining at SCQF level 6C or better and level 6A or better are in line with the VC.
- Senior leaders recognise the need to keep under review the school's presentation policy across specific departments to support high but appropriate expectations for all learners. This will help staff to support young people to make better informed, aspirational coursing decisions as they move into and through the senior phase. Ongoing development work strengthening progression in the BGE should support sustained improvement in the senior phase.

## Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff offer a range of clubs, activities and educational visits, for example in the areas of music, wellbeing and sport. These provide opportunities for personal achievement, allowing most young people to demonstrate improved confidence and teamwork skills.
- Staff recognise young people's achievements well through awarding certificates and celebrating success on social media. They also celebrate them through assemblies and displays around the school. There are a number of opportunities for young people to gain accreditation, for example through SQA Mental Health and Saltire awards. Almost all young people in the senior phase are developing well their leadership skills. Initiatives, such as peer mentoring and the North Ayrshire Sports Academy programmes, successfully support improvements in young people's communication and team building skills.
- Most young people are able to demonstrate that they are responsible citizens through involvement in charity work. The S2 Youth Philanthropy Initiative, Mountain Bike Club and Royal National Lifeboat Institution are strong examples of learners making a positive contribution to the local community. Prefect teams seek to promote the role of learners in shaping change and school improvement. Young people, especially from S1 to S3, would welcome opportunities to lead and contribute further to school improvement.
- Senior leaders track and monitor participation levels to identify young people not yet engaging in achievement opportunities. They should continue to improve approaches to capturing the skills that young people develop and use this intelligence to plan appropriate progression for all. This should also inform the further development of achievement and leadership progression pathways.
- All young people in S5 and S6 regularly participate in wider achievement activities. They benefit from the opportunity to work with partners including the Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST) and local employers from the hospitality industry. These partnerships develop very well young people's skills for learning, life and work while strengthening links with the local community. A range of partners speak very positively about collaboration with the school. Most young people in the senior phase can articulate how wider achievements support their skills development. As planned, senior leaders should continue to support young people to develop their understanding of skills developed through involvement in wider achievement activities.

## Equity for all learners

- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic context of the school. Almost all young people reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 6 and 8. In three of the five years from 13/14 to 17/18, the average complementary tariff scores for leavers in SIMD decile 8 are significantly much higher than those of young people living in the same decile across the country. Staff are aware that hidden barriers include potential poverty of access to wider resources and opportunity and take action to mitigate against these.
- Senior leaders consult with all stakeholders on the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). They use research evidence appropriately to support improvements in reading and teaching and learning. Additional staffing from PEF is improving outcomes for identified young people, especially in literacy.

## Destinations

- In three of the five years from 14/15 to 18/19, all young people achieved a positive initial leaver destination. The majority leave to enter higher education with a considerable minority

taking up employment. Staff work very well with key partners, including local businesses and Skills Development Scotland, to sustain positive destinations.

## 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.