

Summarised Inspection Findings

Milne's High School

Moray Council

SEED No: 5202930

6 June 2017

School Name **Milne's High School**
Council: **Moray Council**
SEED number: **5202930**
Roll (Sep 2016): **421**

Attendance in 2015/16 is 93.17%. The exclusion rate was 118 per 1000.

Attendance in 2014/15 of 93 per cent is in line with the national average of 92 per cent.

In February 2016 8 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2015 0 per cent of the pupils lived in the 20 per cent most deprived datazones in Scotland.²

In September 2015 0—<5 per cent of the pupils were from minority ethnic groups.

In September 2016 the school reported that 36 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

The school is located in an 'accessible rural area' (population <3K but within 30 minutes of 10K).¹

Any other relevant contextual information

In the past few years there has been a significant turnover in staff in the school.

1. Location is grouped into eight categories based on the size of the population the school is in. These categories are:

- Large urban areas (population >125K)
- Other urban (population >10K)
- Accessible small town (population 3-10K but within 30 minutes of 10K)
- Remote small town (population 3-10K and more than 30 minutes from 10K)
- Very remote small town (population 3-10K and more than 60 minutes from 10K)
- Accessible rural (population <3K but within 30 minutes of 10K)
- Remote rural (population <3K and more than 30 minutes from 10K)
- Very remote rural (population <3K and more than 60 minutes from 10K)

2. Data is based on SIMD 2012. Pupils whose address cannot be matched to an SIMD data zone have not been included in the calculation.

1.3 LEADERSHIP OF CHANGE

good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- *Developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community*
 - *Strategic planning for continuous improvement*
 - *Implementing improvement and change.*
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- The school developed its current vision and values in 2015 after extensive consultation and agreement with young people, staff and parents. These took account of the context of the school at the time and what the culture needed to be to ensure that all young people achieved as highly as they possibly could and move to positive destinations on leaving school. There is a shared understanding of the vision, values and aims across staff and this has underpinned aspects of the school's development work such as developing the culture so that it can achieve its aims. There is a need now to ensure that the vision and values are understood by all learners and thereby further support continuous change and improvement. The school community demonstrates a commitment to ensuring equity. This work could be of a higher profile and be more explicit across the school community to ensure that there is a shared understanding of what equity means in practice.
 - The headteacher, now in her second year in this post, has provided very effective leadership in making a number of necessary and well-judged changes. Overall, staff, parents and partners are positive about the sense of direction and changes which have been made in the school since her appointment. The headteacher has a clear vision for school improvement and has shared a clear three-year plan as to how this can be achieved. The plan makes clear the interconnectedness of aspects of the school's work. Taking into account the context and stage of development of the school, the headteacher has managed the strategic direction and the pace of change effectively. However, the plans have not been in place long enough for their impact to be fully realised. She leads by example and has high expectations for herself, staff and young people.
 - The headteacher is ably supported by three deputy headteachers. Together they work effectively and cohesively as a senior leadership team. They convey consistent messages and provide support and challenge to their link departments as they drive forward priorities for school improvement. They have in place a methodology for evaluating change but need now to ensure that they provide appropriate challenge where plans are not being met. Under their leadership, there is a culture where staff feel valued and involved in the change process.
 - The priorities for school improvement in the most recent school improvement plan (SIP) have been identified and agreed in line with the desired targets outlined in the school's three year plan. They have been drawn up from the results of self-evaluation activity and take full account of local authority and national priorities and the context of the school. It is clearly understood across the school community that raising aspirations and attainment is a key priority. Staff are aware of the socio-

economic context of the school and understand how the school priorities relate to this. The school has established links with the Locality Management Group (LMG) which offers a useful vehicle to make better use of local data to identify need and agree specific actions in response. There has been some positive work from this although the partnership is at an early stage of development. Staff show a commitment to and demonstrate a collective responsibility for achieving the school priorities for improvement. All demonstrate this in a variety of ways such as participating in at least one of the school improvement groups, leading key projects, and undertaking appropriate professional learning.

- In identifying the priorities for school improvement, staff reflect on the results of self-evaluation and Quality Indicators outlined in *How good is our school?* (4th edition) (HGIOS?4) and interrogation of a range of data including local area data and that from Insight. In this way, staff take ownership of the improvement plan and are invested in making change happen. Staff have worked hard to develop departmental improvement plans which link with whole-school priorities. Whilst some coherence is evident, greater consistency in the quality of planning could be achieved across the school. Consistency in high-quality planning and evaluating progress more robustly would better enable achievement of the improvement agenda. The school seeks the views of stakeholders and acts upon them. Parents, through the Parent Council, and partners are consulted when the plan is at the draft stages. However young people are not yet sufficiently involved in shaping change. Engaging young people in school improvement would develop their greater capacity and support the school to respond and adapt to change effectively.
- Staff benefit from a well-planned annual review process which supports them to celebrate successes and set new targets for agreed outcomes over the following session. There is an increasing commitment from staff to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) professional standards and to professional learning and development. This includes staff working towards Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) working in Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer (QAMSO) and verifier roles, serving on a local authority (LA) strategy group or sharing practice with peers in a 'By staff for staff' session.
- The headteacher is supporting and encouraging the development of leadership at all levels. A high proportion of staff are fairly new to the school. Many established members of staff act as mentors to new staff. Middle leaders are key to ensuring that the plans for school improvement are implemented in their departments. The strong practice exhibited by a few in areas, such as creating clear and focused departmental improvement plans and monitoring their progress and impact, should be shared better across middle leaders to help achieve consistency. A range of school improvement groups linked to the SIP priorities are in place with a few led by non-promoted members of staff.

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.*

- Young people speak positively about the support which they are receiving from their teachers. Almost all young people are respectful in their relationships with their teachers and each other. A majority of young people from the pre-inspection questionnaire and focus groups feel that the school is helping them to become more confident.
- The school is developing arrangements to enable young people to give their views more effectively. This is welcomed by young people who are keen to assume an even more active role in shaping the life of the school. While the majority of young people feel that they are being given some opportunity to influence what and how they learn, they would benefit from more planned opportunities to reflect on their learning and what they need to do to improve.
- Young people are confident in their use of digital technology and work well on tasks and assignments using PCs and other devices. The introduction of an interactive homework software package is received well by learners and their parents. In some of the lessons observed, teachers used digital technology as part of their teaching. However, in the majority of lessons, there is scope for more imaginative application of, for example, the interactive whiteboards to create more stimulating learning opportunities with higher levels of interaction by all young people.
- Almost all young people recognise the opportunities which they have to take part in school clubs and other activities. There is a good range of sports clubs and musical activities including the Milne's High School Fiddlers (ex 'Fochabers Fiddlers'). Young people are being encouraged to make connections across their learning through a range of inter-disciplinary learning activities. Wider programmes including work experience, outdoor learning, challenge days and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) events are providing young people with enhanced opportunities to develop and apply their skills in different contexts.
- In most of the learning observed, teachers shared the learning intentions with young people. The success criteria could be more focused to emphasise the demands being placed on learners and consideration should be given to involving them more in co-creating success criteria. This in turn will help them to reflect on the skills and qualities which they are developing. It would also encourage greater responsibility for their own learning and a clearer understanding of how to measure their progress as independent learners. In some areas of the curriculum, young people's understanding of their learning is being supported through self- and peer-assessment, and high quality feedback. There is scope to develop more effective

use of feedback across all areas to inform next steps in learning. In most classes observed, teachers provide clear instructions and explanations. When given the opportunity, young people work well together in peer and group activities. While at an early stage of development, learners are being encouraged to review and evaluate their learning and progress through learning conversations.

- Most young people are motivated and keen to do well. There is scope, however, for teachers to raise their expectations of what learners can achieve by increasing the pace and challenge for some. The school has identified steps to develop approaches to questioning which will promote the skills of higher order thinking through placing a greater emphasis on analysis and evaluation. This will require, in many instances, a shift in balance away from questioning techniques, which are primarily checking knowledge, understanding and recall, to more open-ended questioning to support higher order thinking skills.
- Young people, in some instances, are benefitting from applying their learning to real life contexts both in classroom activities and in learning beyond the classroom. In the better lessons, young people are making connections with prior learning or with learning experiences in other curriculum areas. Similarly, teachers should continue to develop learning and teaching strategies which actively develop initiative and promote independent thinking and personal responsibility. At present, there are limited opportunities for young people to lead in their learning. Much of the learning is teacher directed, with limited evidence of differentiation, or building on the prior learning of individuals or groups. Consideration should be given to building on identified good practice and embedding more active approaches to learning.
- Not all subject departments are planning holistically in terms of learning, teaching and assessment. For some, assessment is planned as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. However, this is not yet consistent across the school. Staff are continuing to develop their understanding of the significant aspects of learning and how to apply them effectively in their planning. Departments use a range of assessment strategies to gather information on the progress young people are making. In best practice, these strategies include opportunities for young people to self- and peer-assess. We have asked staff to consider how to extend the range of assessment methods they use with young people in order to support more detailed and effective feedback on learning.
- There is, as yet, no clear overview of young people's progress through the broad general education (BGE). The school is at an early stage in gathering data which demonstrates young people's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Moderation is an area that should be developed further within departments, across the school and with the associated schools' group (ASG). This will enhance further teacher confidence in making robust judgements about curriculum for excellence levels through improved, shared understanding of national standards.
- In the BGE, most departments are at a point of transition in terms of their understanding and application of terminology which captures the level of achievement of young people. There is a need for greater consistency in developing a whole-school approach to ensure an overview both across the school and of specific groups. At present, there is no historic or current whole-school picture demonstrating the progress of young people in Curriculum for Excellence levels. The

school has recently introduced learning conversations, but they are not yet well understood by many young people and staff. We have said to the school that further work is required to define the purpose of these conversations clearly with further discussion around how these can be managed best in order to achieve greatest impact. The school has recently introduced a profiling system but this is not yet comprehensively used by either staff or young people and will require continued focus over time if it is to realise further improvements.

- In the senior phase, the school has developed its approaches to tracking young people's progress at whole-school level. Tracking information is gathered monthly to highlight progress in current performance against the target grades set for national qualifications and other awards. Young people regularly discuss with their teachers how they can improve their grades.

2.2 CURRICULUM: Theme 3, Learning Pathways

- The school's curriculum aims to equip young people with the skills and confidence for learning, life and work. Learning is being planned around the four contexts and reflects the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. The school takes due account of its local context, for example, linking with local employers and community groups in planning learning and through consortia links with the local college. A shared tracking system ensures young people's progress at college is shared with the school at agreed times of the year. Flexibility exists for young people with an identified need. The curriculum rationale is further expressed in the school's learning and teaching strategy with specific reference to young people's entitlements as learners.
- Young people are being supported well at points of transition, with enhanced arrangements in place for those with additional needs. These transition arrangements now require to be developed to include planned programmes of learning across the BGE to promote continuity in young people's learning as they move from primary to secondary.
- In the BGE, young people access all of the curriculum areas with teachers planning lessons primarily around third level experiences. In S1 and S2, learning is supported by a programme of electives and activity days. In S2, young people personalise their course of study to combine continued study of English, mathematics, French, religious education, physical education and Personal and Social Education (PSE), with four courses chosen from within the other curriculum areas.
- Learning in S3 is being enhanced through a residential experience for all young people. Due consideration should be given to the nature of learning in the final year of the broad general education. Where young people elect to follow a subject in the senior phase which has not been studied in S3, departments must ensure that arrangements are in place to enable young people to overtake any missed learning. For some learners, SkillForce is available as an option with the opportunity to access a good range of recognised qualifications.
- In the senior phase, young people choose six courses of study from a range of subject options, with different levels of accreditation. Planned progression routes exist in most subject areas providing young people with the opportunity to build on their prior learning. Learning pathways in the senior phase are enhanced with opportunities for wider achievement, as well as access to courses being offered in other schools and the local college. The school should review the curriculum provision for those young people in S5 who do not currently have a full timetable. All young people follow a timetabled programme of physical education from S1 – S6. A planned programme of Religious and Moral Education (RME) is available currently to young people in S1 – S4, though not in S5 and S6.
- The school is increasingly working with a range of partners to ensure positive outcomes for young people. A range of partners contribute effectively to young people's learning through providing meaningful opportunities to develop the skills for learning, life and work. A school partnership agreement with Skills Development Scotland underpins the support provided in school in developing an awareness of the world of work.

2.7 PARTNERSHIPS: Theme 3, Impact on learners and families – Parental Engagement

- Parents are very pleased with the improved communication between school and home in the last eighteen months. They welcome the regular information they receive on the work of the school. In particular, text messages and social media provide parents with useful updates which are timely and concise. Most parents say they receive helpful information about how their child is doing from feedback and reports. Most also feel that the information reaches them at the right time. The majority agree that the school takes parental views into account when making changes, but a few parents who met with HM Inspectors would welcome further guidance about how the school has responded to feedback received from them.
- The school sees improving partnership working as a priority and this is recognised within the whole-school improvement plan. The school has recently developed a parental engagement strategy developed by the headteacher and Chair of Parent Council (CPC) following a training session for Parent Council members. Both the Parent Council and school are keen to explore through a number of strategies the reasons behind a historic lack of participation. Through a number of innovative strategies, the headteacher and CPC are hoping to make inroads into attracting greater numbers of parents to be involved more closely in their children's learning. A very good start has been made to this in terms of the online interactive homework system where parents are engaging with and in some cases supporting young people on the home learning activities and tasks set by teachers. The 'By parents for parents' initiative introduced by the school and Parent Council is aiming to tackle any barriers to parental engagement in order to improve levels of participation.

2.1: SAFEGUARDING

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

3.1 ENSURING WELLBEING, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- *Wellbeing*
- *Fulfilment of statutory duties*
- *Inclusion and equality.*

- The school recognises that positive relationships and nurturing principles are central to developing a whole-school approach to wellbeing. The additional support needs (ASN) team provides helpful information and up-to-date research on supporting learning. This is supporting teachers to improve outcomes for all young people. Effective training sessions have been held for staff to help them to understand their individual and collective responsibility for the wellbeing of all young people. As a result, all staff have awareness of 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) and the wellbeing indicators. The school should build on this positive start and embed a whole-school approach to the use of wellbeing indicators, which are currently unfamiliar to most young people and parents. This will help staff to monitor all young people's wellbeing and evidence outcomes for health and wellbeing.
- The school is seeking views on wellbeing and is responsive to any issues raised. In a recent school survey, concerns of young people about feeling safe and cared for at school were highlighted. The school took positive steps to address these concerns including the development of an anti-bullying policy. The school should now ensure that all young people feel they have someone they can speak to if they have a concern or worry.
- The current working group on universal pupil support is developing whole-school approaches to pastoral care, wellbeing and improving attainment. This will help to address the concerns being raised by some pupils and parents who feel that the school could provide better advice to help young people make choices for the future. Staff training is being planned and the school needs to ensure that ongoing support is provided to help staff to undertake this important development.
- There have been improvements in the behaviour of young people in recent years as a result of improved learning and a review of the school's approaches to managing behaviour. However, as a consequence, the school's exclusion rates are higher than the national average and the school now needs to review its approaches to ensure all young people are included and feel respected. As planned, the school should take forward its involvement in Rights Respecting Schools and develop whole-school approaches to promoting positive relationships and restorative approaches to ensure all young people's rights are at the forefront of everything the school does.
- Positive partnerships are being developed with a range of agencies which are helping to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for young people. Partners feel

valued and involved in decision making processes. The school's involvement in the LMG led to the appropriate current focus on mental health which involves young people and their families being able to access specialist support through the 'Hearspace' project. This is resulting in reduced numbers of referrals to GPs and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services as well as increasing friendship circles for young people and offering ways to improve mental health.

- A number of senior pupils provide effective role models for others, promoting an active lifestyle by leading dance groups and coaching in sports. As a result, young people understand the importance of daily activity and have good levels of participation in the wide range of after-school clubs. Local produce and freshly prepared food is a key feature of the school catering service. Whole-school activities, such as the farmers' market, led by home economics students, help young people to develop a good awareness and understanding of local, sustainable food. The focus on substance misuse through the performance of the play 'Hooked' over six years engages young people well and supports them to explore their attitudes and values in relation to drugs.
- The school has correctly recognised the need to develop learning conversations which help young people to participate more fully in their learning. Commendably, young people with additional support needs are offered the opportunity of an advocate to attend meetings about their progress. This is helping a few young people to become active participants in their own development. The staff need to continue to embed these approaches across the school. More use should be made of self-evaluation to ensure young people are active participants in discussion and decisions about all aspects of their lives, including careers and learning and support plans. This will help young people to understand themselves better as learners and improve their confidence and independence.
- Senior leaders have a sound knowledge and understanding of legislative requirements and statutory duties related to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. There are effective policies and procedures in place. The school should review its provision for RME to ensure that it fulfils its statutory requirement and provides all young people with meaningful learning throughout the senior phase. The school has made appropriate provision for Religious Observance (RO) which is in line with national guidance. The senior leadership team is aware that recent changes to the chaplaincy team provide an opportunity to review provision in this area with a view to increasing leadership opportunities for young people. Current legislation requires the school to include a clear statement about the parental right to withdraw children from RME and RO within the school handbook and on the school website.
- Overall, the school's approaches to ensuring inclusion and equality are supporting young people to achieve well. Most young people are involved in aspects of the life of the school. The school ambassadors system is a helpful way to ensure all young people have the opportunity to have their voices heard. The school should ensure that young people have more input into this in order to provide them with increased leadership within the school. The school should continue to develop ways to involve young people from S1 to S4 in leadership roles across the school. This will enable them to develop as responsible citizens and effective contributors.
- Most young people find the support they receive helpful in ensuring that they gain

the outcomes they need to enter a positive destination and develop as confident, responsible citizens. Young people who require additional help with their learning speak very highly of the effective support provided by the ASN team. This enables them to engage with their learning and achieve as well as they can. With effective leadership, the ASN team plays a strong role in ensuring targeted young people engage with their learning and develop a range of important skills. There is scope for subject teaching staff to improve their use of assessment and knowledge of individual needs to plan personalised learning more effectively. This will help to ensure the highest possible outcomes for all young people across the school, including young people who are at risk of exclusion. Working with young people, pastoral care staff should review the PSE curriculum to provide a vibrant and relevant experience for all young people.

- Almost all staff and partners feel they are treated fairly and with respect around the school. Most pupils feel this way although about a quarter of those who responded to the Education Scotland questionnaire did not feel that staff treated them fairly and with respect. A few also felt that other pupils did not treat them fairly and with respect. This is hindering the progress of some young people. To address this, the school should review its pupil support systems to increase teamwork, focus on improving outcomes and ensure everyone across the school has the skills to carry out their roles and responsibilities to support young people.
- The school is proactive in challenging discrimination and removing barriers to learning. The effective work of the school librarian, nurse and home-school link worker to create a diversity resource is helping young people and staff to understand individual differences and challenge discrimination. The recent notable work on transgender issues is helping young people to understand this area better and remove barriers to learning. There is scope to be more proactive in tackling gender stereotypes when making course choices.
- The school has started to track and monitor targeted groups of young people and support and challenge staff to ensure they have effective strategies in place to improve outcomes for more vulnerable young people. There is a need to develop approaches to identify the 'Milnes' gap' and put in place strategies to close the gap through improved attainment and achievement for the targeted groups of young people. It is important that pastoral care staff are involved in the development of this process.

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

BGE

- According to data provided by the school, in the past year, most young people attained the Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy appropriate to their stage. According to current tracking data, almost all young people are attaining Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy appropriate to their stage by the end of S3. The school was not able to provide inspectors with data for attainment in literacy or numeracy for previous years.
- While the current tracking data suggests there will be improvement this session in attainment levels achieved by the end of S3, it is too early to measure reliably the impact of the school's strategy for raising attainment.
- The tracking system the school is putting in place has been recently developed and has still to be fully populated in order to be of optimum use. The school is at the early stages of tracking progress and attainment of different groups of learners and as a result is not yet able to identify their progress in literacy and numeracy.
- The school has undertaken a few moderation activities internally and with colleagues from ASG primary schools in literacy and numeracy in recent years. There is scope to develop moderation activity to be more robust and to include all curriculum areas. This will continue to build the confidence of teachers in making judgements about the progress of young people in their learning in relation to national standards.

Senior Phase

Attainment in literacy by the time of leaving school

- Over the past five years, almost all young people have achieved SCQF level 3 or better and SCQF level 4 or better in literacy on leaving school. There is an overall improving trend at SCQF level 5 or better although not as a course award. The percentage of young people attaining literacy at SCQF level 6 is showing no overall improvement over the five-year period but has remained in line with the VC in the past five years. The school performed in line with the VC across SCQF levels 5 and 6 over the past 5 years and higher or significantly higher than the VC at SCQF level 4 in four of the last five years.

Attainment in numeracy by the time of leaving school

- Over the past five years, almost all young people have achieved SCQF level 3 or better in numeracy on leaving school. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 4 or better shows an overall significant improving trend over the past

five years. There is also an overall improving trend at SCQF level 5 or better although not as a course award. The percentage of young people attaining numeracy at SCQF level 6 is showing no overall improvement over the five-year period. The school performed in line with the VC across SCQF levels over the past two years.

Those leaving at the end of S4:

- The percentage of young people attaining **literacy** at SCQF level 3 or better and level 4 or better has been significantly higher than the VC in three of the last five years. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5 or better has been in line with the VC over the past 5 years. There have been improvements but no consistently improving trend at SCQF levels 4 and 5.
- The percentage of young people attaining **numeracy** at SCQF levels 3 or better and SCQF level 4 or better has been significantly higher or in line with the VC over the past five years. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5 or better has been in line with the VC over the past five years. There is no consistently improving trend at this level.

Those leaving at the end of S5:

- There has been overall significant improvement in the percentage of young people attaining **literacy** at SCQF level 4 or better over the latest five years. At SCQF level 5 or better and level 6 there is an improving trend overall. In the latest year the percentage attaining **literacy** at SCQF level 6 has fallen significantly lower than the VC.
- Overall, the percentage of young people attaining **numeracy** is in line with the VC. There is an improving trend at SCQF level 4 or better, although there has been a decrease in the percentage attaining at this level in the latest year. At SCQF level 5 or better, there is an improving trend, though not as a course award. There has been a decrease in the percentage attaining at SCQF level 6 since 2013/14 although the school remains in line with the VC.

Those leaving at the end of S6:

- Over the past five years, the percentage of young people attaining **literacy** across SCQF levels 3 to 5 or better has been improving and in line with the VC. There have been significant improvements at SCQF level 5+ overall but there has been a decrease in the percentage attaining the course award in the latest year. The percentage of those attaining SCQF level 5 or better (course award) and level 6 is significantly lower and much lower respectively, than the VC in 2015/16.
- Over the past five years, the percentage of young people attaining **numeracy** across SCQF levels 3 to 5 or better has been in line with the VC. There have been improvements at SCQF level 5 and level 6 and a significant increase at level 4+ but there has been a decrease in the percentage attaining at these levels in the latest year.

As young people move through the school from S4 to S6

- **In S4**, the percentage of young people attaining **literacy** at SCQF level 3 or better and level 4 or better has been significantly higher than the VC in three of the last five years. **By S5** at SCQF level 5 or better and level 6 there is an improving trend overall. In the latest year the percentage attaining **literacy** at SCQF level 6 has fallen significantly lower than the VC. However, **by S6** the percentage of those attaining SCQF level 5 or better (course award) and level 6 is significantly lower and much lower respectively, than the VC in 2015/16.

- In **S4**, the percentage of young people attaining **numeracy** at SCQF level 4 or better has been significantly higher or in line with the VC over the past five years. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 5 or better has been in line with the VC over the past five years. **By S5** the percentage of young people attaining **numeracy** is also in line with the VC. At SCQF level 5 or better, there is an improving trend, though not as a course award. **By S6** There have been improvements at SCQF level 5 and level 6 and a significant increase at level 4+ but there has been a decrease in the percentage attaining at these levels in the latest year.

Attainment over time

BGE

- The school could not provide attainment data on the progress of young people in their learning across the broad general education. They recognise that there is more work to do to enable the collation of robust data on attainment and evidence of how well young people build on prior learning across the curriculum. A better developed understanding of progress and achievement in the broad general education will support staff to raise attainment further in the senior phase.

Senior Phase

- The average complementary tariff scores for all leavers has been in line with the VC in each of the latest five years.
- For the lowest attaining 20% of young people performance has been significantly higher or much higher than the VC in four of the latest five years.
- There has been no consistent improvement in the performance of the middle 60% or highest 20% over the past five years, although these have been in line with the VC. All groups have seen a decline in the past year.
- In S4, the lowest attaining 20% in the school have performed significantly higher than the VC in three of the past five years but have declined over the past two years with the latest year falling to be in line with the VC. The middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% in the school have improved overall in the past five years and are in line with the VC.
- By S5, the lowest attaining 20% in the school and middle 60% have performed in line with the VC. The highest attaining 20% in the school have fallen to significantly lower than the VC in the last year.
- By S6, the lowest attaining 20% and highest attaining 20% in the school are in line with the VC. The middle 60% in the latest year have fallen to significantly lower than the VC.

Breadth and depth

- The proportion of young people in S4 achieving one or more to six or more awards at SCQF levels 3 and 4 is in line with or significantly higher than the VC in recent years. By S5 and S6, those attaining at SCQF level 5 (C+, and also A+ by S6) is overall in line with VC. However, those attaining at level 6 (C+, A+) in S5 and in S6 is significantly lower/much lower than VC for 4+ courses by S5 and 1+ and 2+ courses by S6.

- At S4, the proportion of young people achieving one or more to six or more awards at SCQF Level 3 or better has sometimes been significantly higher or much higher but is mostly in line with the VC in the past five years. The proportion of young people achieving one or more to six or more awards at SCQF Level 4 or better has more often been significantly higher or in line with the VC in the past five years. At S4, the proportion of young people achieving one or more to six or more awards at SCQF Level 5C+ has overall been in line with the VC but there is no improving trend. In the latest year, the measure of one or more and two or more awards is significantly higher than the VC.
- By S5, attainment at SCQF 5C+ is consistently in line with the VC. The proportions achieving one or more to six or more awards at SCQF 6C+ is overall in line with VC. However at 6C+ and 6A+ for four or more courses it is significantly lower and much lower respectively than the VC in the latest year.
- By S6, the proportions achieving one or more to six or more awards at SCQF level 5C+ and 5A+ is in line with the VC. By S6 the proportions achieving one or more to six or more awards at SCQF level 6C+ and 6A+ is in line with the VC. However, it has fallen to be significantly much lower and lower for one or more and two or more in the latest year at 6C+.
- At all measures at SCQF level 7 attainment is in line with the VC.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- The value of achievement is well recognised by the school as an important motivator in raising aspiration amongst young people. As such the school recognises and celebrates young people's achievements well, celebrating and sharing these in school and beyond through newsletters, displays, merit certificates linked to houses and individual BGE Star Pupil.
- Tracking of achievements is in the very early stages using the Moray Skills Framework. The school recognises there is significant work to be done in order to use information effectively in order to plan opportunities for all young people to achieve. The school is evidencing learning young people are involved in beyond school but does not yet have a clear focus on the skills being developed. There is scope to develop learning conversations so that progress and skills can be planned appropriately in school and beyond. Good practice would be to analyse collated information about wider learning through the lens of equalities and inclusion to identify those young people at risk of missing out and to ensure equity of access.
- Senior young people benefit from having a well-established and well-led Duke of Edinburgh Unit operating within the school. Enthusiastic staff deliver the award. A very good reciprocal arrangement operates with local "Scouts" groups in terms of assessment and access to expedition places. Relationships with local youth work staff are productive and supportive. Successes are actively celebrated in school through assemblies and presentation events. Significant numbers of young people progress through Bronze, Silver and Gold.
- When given the opportunity young people in S6 respond well to the challenges and responsibilities of the Leadership Programme. This provides opportunities to develop responsibilities through involvement in committees, as prefects, house

leaders and peer mentors. As a result young people recognise the positive impact this has for example on their leadership capacity, communication skills and team working as well as their self-esteem. They describe real ownership, pride and belief in their abilities. Such opportunities for personal achievement are less evident for young people in other year groups where they have little opportunity to build skills and capacities progressively, particularly those previously developed in primary school. This is recognised by the school and plans are in development to extend opportunities for leadership and accredited achievement across all year groups.

- Young people from S6 are making a positive contribution to the local community. Senior pupils have actively engaged in supporting the local Men's Shed initiative taking on clear leadership roles. As a result positive intergenerational relationships have been established and mutual respect established. In addition, young people have applied their social media skills to improve the Men's Shed website and social media outlets. This is helping to build the young people's sense of citizenship and improve the school's reputation in the local community.

Equity for all learners

- Over 90% of young people in the school reside in areas designated as SIMD deciles 6-8. No young people are recorded as living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2.

Attainment v deprivation

- Complementary tariff scores for leavers are in line with the national average in 2016.

Destinations

- In the past five years almost all young people who have left school achieved a positive destination. In the past five years around 40% of leavers go to higher education.
- In the last two years the percentage of young people staying on in school from S4 into S5 has moved from being significantly lower or much lower than the VC to in line with the VC. The percentage staying on to S6 has been significantly lower than the VC for the past five years.

SCHOOL CHOICE OF QI 1.1 SELF-EVALUATION FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT

This indicator defines rigorous self-evaluation as a responsibility of all stakeholders. It highlights the importance of partnership approaches to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. It emphasizes the need for strong leadership and robust analysis of a range of intelligence and data as essential features of effective continuous improvement. A key factor in this indicator is demonstrating the impact of self-evaluation in relation to outcomes for all learners. Their active participation in self-evaluation is therefore essential.

- *Theme 1: Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation*
- *Theme 2: Analysis and evaluation of intelligence and data*
- *Theme 3: Impact on learners' successes and achievements*

Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation

- Since taking up post in 2015, the headteacher has communicated clearly to staff, parents and young people that self-evaluation is integral to identifying, and taking forward, school improvements. Together with the depute headteachers, she has used a range of effective approaches to engage staff in understanding their key role in self-evaluation activities. The school developed self-evaluation and quality assurance policy in 2015 following the launch of HGIOS?4 which has supported a systematic approach.
- Through staff meetings and professional learning events, a whole-school approach to school improvement has been clearly outlined. Teachers are increasing their understanding of their key role in school improvement. Staff are working well together as a team and there is an increasing culture of collaboration. All teachers are members of at least one of the school improvement groups. Groups have action plans which usefully provide information on expected outcomes and tasks along with updates on the work being taken forward. Pupil support assistants have played an important role in providing evidence to improve aspects of pupil behaviour. They recently presented a professional learning session based on their own observations to principal teachers. This evidence has been used to improve the focus on differentiation across the school. There remains scope to involve young people further in self-evaluation and increase their understanding of their important role in improving the work of the school to meet the needs of all young people.
- Parents have been involved in the creation of the SIP through the work of the Parent Council. They have welcomed the consultative approach used by the headteacher and say they have been in a position to influence important aspects of the SIP. The school should continue with the work to widen the engagement with a broader range of parents in discussing school improvement. Further involvement of partners in self-evaluation is now needed to ensure that all those involved in young people's learning are part of improving outcomes for all young people.
- Staff have gathered a range of evidence to provide the starting point for the three-year action plan and subsequent annual SIPs. At the outset, this highlighted a school with low staff morale and young people lacking aspiration with falling attainment. Visualisation of the overview of school improvement work using a jigsaw diagram has helped stakeholders understand the connectedness of the work. The three-year action plan jigsaw has raising attainment as a centre piece and areas such as self-

evaluation, learning and teaching, curriculum design and ethos of ambition as surrounding jigsaw pieces. The school improvement work for last year and the current year were also presented using the same approach. Each area of work, represented in a jigsaw piece, was then further explored by staff groups. Staff find this approach useful, helping their understanding of school improvement work. Staff feel that the work is manageable and proportionate and they understand clearly how the priorities were identified. They feel they have been consulted and listened to and have a shared sense of ownership of the improvement work. Department improvement plans follow a similar framework to the SIP. The quality of these plans is variable and within this overall approach there are some inconsistencies in the way quality assurance procedures are used across the school. The school should continue the practice of ensuring that teachers and pupils contribute to discussions related to the plan and the setting of targets, encouraging collegiality and shared ownership of the plan.

- A whole-school self-evaluation calendar usefully describes a variety of scheduled activities. This includes one-to-one learning conversations, attainment reviews of SQA results, learning visits, a range of focus groups with pupils, parents and staff, surveys, tracking and monitoring periods and sampling of reports and homework. Department self-evaluation calendars reflect similar activities. Senior leaders now need to ensure that all staff utilise an appropriate range of reliable evidence to evaluate and plan for improvement.
- Principal teachers welcome the opportunities to have an influence in identifying school priorities for improvement. They have a heightened awareness of the importance of self-evaluation. They recognise more work is needed to involve young people in improving their learning experience. There is scope to increase the self-evaluation role of principal teachers in, for example, lesson observations, further analysis of data and developing the role of young people as learners. Principal teachers are now ready to ensure that approaches to departmental self-evaluation are more consistent and shared across departments. The principal teachers should continue to work together to build their role as middle leaders in the school in taking forward building capacity in relation to self-evaluation. They should ensure that they play a key role in improving classroom practice.
- Work in areas such as 'Growth Mindset' and digital learning is building the skills of staff well. Professional reading is increasingly developing an outward looking perspective and informing change. There is scope for teachers to work further with colleagues from across sectors and from other educational establishments to identify and share good practice with the aim of improving the consistency of high-quality learning and teaching.

Analysis and evaluation of intelligence and data

- The senior leadership team has shared a range of intelligence and data with staff. This includes data such as attendance, coursing of young people, exclusions, post school destinations, feedback from learning visits and SQA attainment data. They have encouraged teachers to reflect on the evidence and think about their own contributions to whole-school improvement. Teachers across the school are developing their knowledge of Insight and beginning to examine and analyse data to plan appropriate work to secure improvements. They should continue to develop their understanding of performance information about groups of young people to plan

learning pathways so that all young people can make the best possible progress in their learning and achieve as highly as possible.

- SEEMiS tracking systems are used to good effect to monitor young people's progress in the senior phase. Young people's performance is tracked against target grades for the qualification and reports are sent home at regular intervals. The senior leadership team has an overview of the tracking information to inform school improvement work on curriculum choices and presentation for qualifications. The tracking of young people's progress across the school from S1 to S3 is still developing. Information on results from standardised tests is available and is used in some departments to inform expected progress. Guidance staff have an important role to play in the monitoring and tracking of progress of all young people. It is important that they have an overview of each young person across their learning to ensure a holistic approach is taken to planning interventions appropriate to the individual.

Impact on learners' successes and achievements

- The school acknowledges that it is too early to secure impact across all aspects of the recent school improvement work. Staff and young people are very positive about the improvements already secured in school ethos, staff confidence and aspirations for young people. Teachers welcome the clarity of strategic direction and their own increased involvement in school improvement.

PARTICULAR STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

- The leadership provided by the headteacher and senior leadership team which is creating a culture for improvement. They are providing clear strategic direction and managing change at an appropriate pace.
- The collaborative work of all staff which is leading to school improvement. This is developing an effective culture of self-evaluation.
- The support provided by the additional support needs team to help teachers meet the needs of young people across the school. This team plays a strong role in ensuring young people who require additional support with their learning engage better with their learning and develop a range of important skills.

AGREED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT FOR THE SCHOOL

- Improve the consistency of high-quality learning and teaching across the school. Make more effective use of assessment to help plan next steps in young people's learning. Develop more robust monitoring and tracking of young people's progress and attainment from S1 to S3 to raise the attainment of all.
- Review the system of pastoral care to ensure that the pastoral care team is more effective in supporting all young people.
- Involve young people more directly in planning, leading and evaluating their own learning and shaping school improvement. This will help to develop further a culture of responsibility among young people which will support them to develop more independent learning skills.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE INSPECTION?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Moray Council will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.