

Berwickshire High School



School Improvement Report:

Berwickshire High School

2020-2021

Context of the school

Berwickshire High School is a non-denominational state school, located in the town of Duns, in the east of the Scottish Borders.

School role

We have a student role of around 650, which has been steadily falling over the past decade, from 720 in 2011.

Student characteristics

50-60% of the students who attend Berwickshire High School live in areas identified as SIMD 5 & 6. 20-30% live in areas identified as SIMD 7 & 8. Less than 10% live in areas identified as SIMD 9 & 10. There are no students attending from areas identified as SIMD 1 & 2.

10-20% of our students are registered as being entitled to free school meals.

Partnerships

We have five partner primary schools: Chirside, Coldstream, Duns, Greenlaw and Swinton.

We also have close partnership links with a range of local employers and partner organisations, including Community Learning and Development (CLD), which has a member of staff based in our school on a part-time basis.

Leavers' destinations

Based on 2019-20 figures, 94% of students move on to a positive destination. This is above our 'virtual comparator' school (93%).

Roughly two thirds of students move on to university or college; roughly one third move on to training or employment.

Attendance and exclusion

In the 2020-21 session:

- Student attendance was 89.37% (89.04% boys and 89.72% girls). Of absences, 5.5% were 'authorised' and 5.11% were 'unauthorised'.
- There were 6 exclusions (4 boys and 1 girl, who was excluded twice).

Additional support needs

In the 2020-21 session, a little over 40% of students were identified as having an additional support need.

Scottish Attainment Challenge

In the 2020-21 session, the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) allocation to Berwickshire High School was £53,100 (after reduction for central services and support).

This money has been used to:

- Employ two Pastoral Support Assistants (PSAs), with a particular focus on improving attendance of students to school and to classes, and to support parental engagement with the school.
- Employ and train an Additional Needs Assistant (ANA), to focus on targeted numeracy interventions, using the Success at Arithmetic Programme.

Inspection and self-evaluation against key quality indicators

Berwickshire High School was inspected in February 2019, with evaluations against key quality indicators as follows:¹

Leadership of change	Unsatisfactory
Learning, teaching and assessment	Weak
Raising attainment and achievement	Weak
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Weak

A new headteacher took up post in August 2020. Over the subsequent year, the school has made significant improvements across a broad range of areas, with a particular focus on those identified in the 2019 inspection. These improvements have been made whilst managing the fall-out of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We now self-evaluate key quality indicators as follows:

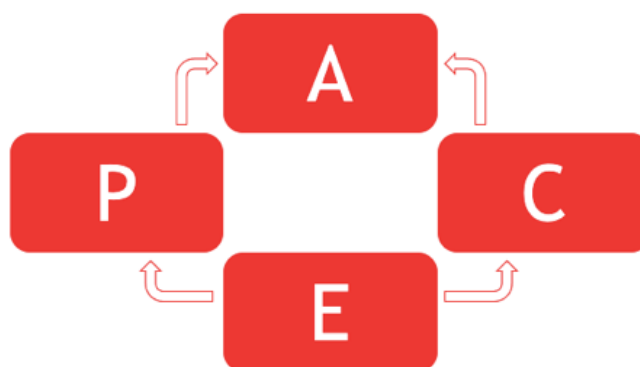
Leadership of change	Good
Learning, teaching and assessment	Good
Raising attainment and achievement	Satisfactory
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Good

We self-evaluate our capacity for continuous improvement as: Very good.

Improvement focus

Our school improvement priorities are informed by national priorities, as set out in the *National Improvement Framework*, and local priorities, as set out in local authority improvement plans. We believe that clarity and simplicity are key features of effective improvement planning.

Accordingly, improvement planning in Berwickshire High School is guided by a common model, PACE:



By focusing on three key areas - ethos, curriculum and pedagogy - we plan for attainment (and wider achievement) to improve.

Evidence of progress

We use a triangulated approach to gather evidence of the progress we are making for each improvement priority. This includes on-going, informal observations and discussions, along with more formal evaluation processes, such as lesson observations, focus groups, surveys, and data analysis.

¹ See Appendix 1 for details of what these ratings mean

Summary of improvements made over 2020-21 session

Vision, aims and values

Our school vision, aims and values have been redefined as follows:



A very warm welcome to

Berwickshire High School



We are a hugely ambitious school and set high standards for everything we do

Our VISION is to become the best state secondary school in the country. **By this, we mean:**

- The quality of our teaching rivals that of any school
- We support, challenge and inspire every student to achieve the very best they can
- Everyone in our school enjoys their work and feels proud of the community they are part of

We AIM to 'create outstanding individuals'. **By this, we mean students who are committed to:**

- Learn - as much as they can
- Achieve - the very best they can
- Contribute - to make our school community better and better

Guiding us in everything we do are five core **VALUES:**

- Committed - we have a mindset of continuous improvement
- Respectful - of others, the building, of ourselves
- Enthusiastic - we get out what we put in
- Supportive - there is help when we need it
- Safe - we look out for each other

These set the direction for everything we are working to achieve. Staff, students and parents report that they are much clearer about this.

Ethos

Standards of behaviour across the school have improved significantly. This is a result of having established high expectations, putting in place clear systems and procedures, and creating professional learning opportunities in this area. As a result, students and staff report that the school feels calm, orderly and purposeful.

We have improved the **academic and pastoral support** we offer students. This has been achieved via:

- A re-design of how our Integrated Support Team staff (including teachers, Additional Needs Assistants (ANAs), Pastoral Support Assistants (PSAs) and Guidance Teachers) use their time.
- The introduction of Berwickshire Intervention Group (BIG) meetings.
- The introduction of bi-annual 1:1 meetings between students and their Guidance Teacher.
- The introduction of weekly parental surgeries.
- The re-introduction of Registration, which functions as first-line pastoral care.
- Acting on messages from the Student Council, which we established this year.
- The introduction of groups designed to support wellbeing, such as the Diversity & Equality Group.

We have improved **communication with staff**, including:

- A more regular pattern of whole-staff meetings and faculty meetings.
- Weekly Extended Leadership Team (ELT) meetings.
- Weekly or fortnightly 1:1 meetings between Depute Rectors and Principal Teachers.
- Weekly 1:1 meetings between the Rector and Depute Rectors.
- Weekly Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Business Meetings.
- Weekly SLT Strategic Meetings.
- 1:1 meetings between the Rector and staff.

- The development of clear policies (for example, regarding use of mobile phones).

We have improved **communication with parents**, including:

- Use of the weekly 'Heads Up' bulletin as a regular newsletter. This includes sections dedicated to Learning Log updates and advance notice of up-coming formal assessments.
- The development of Learning Logs, which are designed to give parents more regular and more useful information about their son/daughter's progress.
- The launch of a new school website.
- Development of documents that make clear the specific content of our curriculum.
- Using MS Teams to host parental information evenings. These have included consultation regarding a new curriculum and a 'The Science of How We Learn' evening.
- Formal consultation on improvement planning.

We have improved **communication with students**, including:

- The introduction of a Student Council.
- Use of noticeboards.
- Use of online platforms, made possible by the Inspire Learning Programme.
- The re-introduction of Registration.
- Weekly Depute Rector focus groups.
- The student Head Team attending weekly SLT meetings.
- Student focus groups as part of Faculty Review weeks.

We have improved how we **recognise and celebrate achievement**, including:

- Improved staff-student relationships.
- The introduction of 'In Recognition...' cards.
- Improvements to the use of class tokens (House points) and Student of the Month.
- Improvements to noticeboards.
- The weekly Heads Up newsletter.
- The introduction of a regular feature in the Berwickshire News.

Curriculum

Through **shared reading and discussion** in the Extended Leadership Team (ELT), Parent Council and with partner Primary schools, we have started to develop a shared understanding of what a high-quality curriculum looks like. As we develop our curriculum in the coming years, this will be very important.

We have developed a clear **curriculum rationale**, which has been shared and discussed with key stakeholders.

We have carried out an **extensive review of our Broad General Education and Senior Phase**, which has included consultation with key stakeholders. As a result:

- There is a strong emphasis on 'citizenship' throughout the curriculum, which is an important part of our curriculum rationale.
- National Experiences and Outcomes have been 'unpacked', so that the specific content of courses is clear to staff, students and parents.
- There is improved challenge in the Broad General Education, meaning they are better prepared for the Senior Phase.
- There is more time available for students studying level 6 courses, which should lead to improved *depth* of learning.
- We have broadened the range of courses available to students in the senior phase.
- Each faculty has improved links with local business partners, as part of our continuing focus on Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)

We have improved the '**wider achievement**' opportunities available to students, including:

- The temporary appointment of a Principal Teacher: Student Leadership, Participation & Achievement.
- The establishment of a Student Council.
- The expansion and development of our student Head Team.
- The introduction of a range of student-led committees.
- The involvement of students in recruitment processes.

Pedagogy

We have developed a high-quality in-school **professional learning programme** for staff. This has included:

- The appointment of a Principal Teacher: Pedagogy.
- Developing a well-resourced Professional Learning Library.
- Developing an online Pedagogy Channel.
- Developing a staff-led workshop programme.
- Establishing a Professional Reading Group.
- Introducing teacher Professional Learning Planning.
- Faculty Review weeks, which include joint-lesson observations, structured self-evaluation, and coaching conversations.

We have developed a school **Lesson Evaluation Toolkit** to support self-evaluation, professional learning, improvement planning, and quality assurance. This has led to improvements in:

- The development of a shared understanding of what a high-quality lesson looks like across the school.
- The quality of coaching conversations.
- The structure of lessons.
- Professional learning planning.

Combined, the professional learning programme and Lesson Evaluation Toolkit are leading to improvements in pedagogy. Specifically, these include:

- The use of regular 'review' to improve learning, including at the start and end of lessons.
- The effective use of learning intentions and success criteria.
- Formative assessment.

We have improved **teaching-centred leadership** across our Extended Leadership Team (ELT), including:

- Weekly ELT meetings.
- Shared reading and discussion.
- Improved systems to share practice.
- Weekly 1:1 meetings between ELT members and their line-manager, with a focus on developing leadership capacity.
- Joint lesson observations, often in trios.
- More focused improvement planning.
- The introduction of teacher Professional Learning Plans.
- The development of more consistent Teaching & Learning Calendars.

As a result, the ELT is more focused on a common goal, which is the continuous improvement of teaching and learning across our school.

We have introduced **Learning Logs**, which are starting to have a positive impact on how we track and report student progress. In the best examples, Learning Logs have improved conversations about learning at home.

We have also introduced a new **whole-school tracking system**. This is helping to give a clearer picture about how students are progressing in their learning, informing conversations and interventions.

We have started to improve **students' independent learning habits**, including via 'the science of how we learn' assemblies with senior students. This work is in the introductory stages and will be a priority for further improvement next session.

Attainment

With the Alternative Certification Model (ACM), the value in trying to compare this year's attainment against previous years' is limited. Generally, there has been no significant increase or decrease in attainment. It remains the case that attainment against key measures (such as 5+ level 5s in S4 and 5+ level 6s by the end of S6) is below where we want it to be.

We believe that the plans we have in place to raise attainment are robust. However, these will take at least 2-3 years to come into fruition. They include:

- Strengthening our Broad General Education (S1-3) through the introduction of a curriculum that is more challenging.
- Improving curricular pathways, with a particular focus on vocational pathways.
- Improving the Senior Phase course choice process, so that we are more aspirational in our presentation levels.
- Introducing standardised assessments in literacy and numeracy in S1-3, with follow-up interventions for those who need them.
- Improving pedagogy in lessons, with a particular focus on formative assessment.
- Improving students' study and self-regulation skills.
- Improving our homework programme.
- Improving the quality of resources to support independent study.
- Improving parental engagement in learning.
- Improving our whole-school tracking and reporting systems.
- Developing a school culture of ambition and pride.
- Introducing S4-6 Attainment Targets for each course.
- Using data more effectively to course students more appropriately.

Other

Engagement with parents

We have improved engagement with parents in a number of ways. This has included:

- Use of the weekly 'Heads Up' bulletin as a regular newsletter. This includes sections dedicated to Learning Log updates and advance notice of up-coming formal assessments.
- The development of Learning Logs, which are designed to give parents more regular and more useful information about their son/daughter's progress.
- The launch of a new school website.
- Development of documents that make clear the specific content of our curriculum.
- Using of MS Teams to host parental information evenings. These have included consultation regarding a new curriculum and a 'The Science of How We Learn' evening.
- Formal consultation on improvement planning.

Factors affecting progress this session

The most significant factor affecting progress this session was Covid-19. Specifically:

- Restrictions on the format of staff and student gatherings, such as meetings and assemblies
- Self-isolation of staff and students
- Remote learning
- The lack of an extracurricular programme
- The lack of opportunity for homework and revision clubs
- The lack of volunteering opportunities
- Anxiety in staff and students

That said, the majority of students and parents were very positive about the quality of our 'remote learning' programme.

Aside from Covid-19, factors affecting progress this session included:

- Long-term staff absences in: Modern Languages, Technologies
- Recruitment challenges in: Maths, English
- Budget challenges
- The requirement to make efficiency savings

What has changed/improved for students?

As a result of the improvements we have made this session, there have been improvements to the following areas for students:

- The ethos in the school.
- The quality of the curriculum.
- The quality of teaching in the classroom.
- The quality of support available.
- The number of leadership and participation opportunities.
- The opportunities to have their voice heard.
- Recognition of achievement.

Next Steps in relation to learning teaching and assessment and inclusion

Building on the progress we have made this year, there will be a continued improvement focus on:

- **Ethos**, including:
 - Building a culture of learning, ambition and pride
 - Leadership and participation opportunities for all
 - Recognising achievement
 - Nurture
- **Curriculum**, including:
 - The specific content (knowledge, skills and experiences)
 - Parental engagement
 - Partnership working with Primary schools
- **Pedagogy**, including:
 - Presenting content, with a particular focus on cognitive load theory
 - Assessment - formative and summative use
 - Differentiated support and challenge
 - Approaches to tracking and reporting progress
 - Homework
 - Independent learning skills and habits

Appendix 1

The *How Good Is Our School?* quality indicator scale:

- Excellent: this aspect of the school's work is outstanding, high quality and sector-leading
- Very Good: major strengths, very few areas for improvement
- Good: important strengths, yet there remain some aspects which require improvement
- Satisfactory: the strengths within this just outweigh the weaknesses, basic provision for learners
- Weak: important weaknesses, there may be some strength, the important weaknesses, either individually or collectively, are sufficient to diminish learners' experiences in substantial ways
- Unsatisfactory: major weaknesses within which require immediate remedial action