



School Improvement Report, 2021-22

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. We have a student role of around 620, 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.

Vision, aims and values

Following consultation with staff, students and parents, we have updated our school aims statement to better link with our vision and values:



A very warm welcome to

Berwickshire High School



We are a hugely ambitious school and set ourselves the highest of standards

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 FOR BEST** in everything we do. Specifically, we aim for our students 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

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) and Quarriers, which have a member of staff based in our school on a part-time basis.

Leavers' destinations

Based on 2020-21 figures, 96% of students move on to a positive destination. This is above the national figure of 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 2021-22 session:

- Student attendance was 88.2%. Of absences, 7% were 'authorised' and 5% were 'unauthorised'.
- Five students were excluded, one of whom was excluded three times. In total, there were seven exclusions.

Additional support needs

In the 2021-22 session, a little over 40% of students were identified as having an additional support need.

Scottish Attainment Challenge

We received £48,600 of Pupil Equity Funding. This has been used for two purposes:

- 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.
- Purchase of a commercial package of standardised literacy and numeracy assessments, for use with S1-3 students

Use of standardised literacy and numeracy assessments has enabled us to uncover gaps in students' literacy and numeracy skills, which we are addressing through a rigorous interventions programme. This includes in-class support and smaller group tuition. Standardised assessments take place towards the start and end of the academic year. Used in this way, we are able to evidence impact. (At the time of writing, we await the results of 2021-22 end-of-year assessments.)

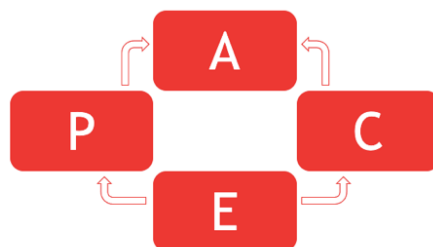
Factors affecting progress

The most significant factors affecting progress this year have been:

- Staff absence, principally as a result of Covid-19
- Staffing challenges, particularly in English and Maths
- Student absence, principally as a result of Covid-19
- Restrictions on the format of staff and student gatherings, such as meetings and assemblies
- The lack of an extracurricular programme
- The lack of opportunity for homework and revision clubs
- The lack of volunteering opportunities
- Budget pressures

Improvements this session

The specific areas we planned to improve were set out in our 2021-22 school Improvement Plan, using a 'PACE' framework to guide our focus (pedagogy, attainment, curriculum, ethos).



Evaluation 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.

Taking into account the context in which we have been working, we believe we have made good progress in all areas. Evidence supporting this judgement comes from four principal sources:

1. School self-evaluation systems
2. A local authority validated self-evaluation (VSE) - October 2021
3. An HMle inspection visit - November 2021
4. Monthly engagement with local authority Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs)

Of particular note are the following statements regarding leadership, from in the HMle Summary of Visit report, published in January 2022:

- The school has made considerable progress in this [leadership at all levels] area for improvement.
- Almost all stakeholders spoken to during the visit identified the very positive impact of the headteacher's leadership, and the new, clearer sense of direction and purpose in the school.
- With strong and supportive leadership from the headteacher, all senior leaders are working effectively with young people and staff to set clear expectations for learning and behaviour.

Further statements from this HMle report are included to support our evaluation of relevant areas.

Pedagogy

Key quotes from HMle Summary of Visit:

- The quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment has improved considerably across the school, with teachers demonstrating increased confidence in classrooms.
- Teachers now have a much improved shared understanding of what high quality learning and teaching looks like. They also demonstrate deeper understanding of how they can enhance their teaching, for example, using a daily review, sharing the aim of the lesson, and sharing how young people can be successful in their learning. Senior leaders and staff have clear plans to continue to improve learning, teaching and assessment, to meet the needs of all young people and to continue to raise attainment.
- All teachers have been supported well to improve their pedagogy. They have been able to engage in high-quality professional learning, including ongoing work with national partners and the principal teacher of pedagogy. All teachers benefit from regular self-evaluation, frequent lesson visits and observations, ongoing dialogue with peers, detailed lesson-observation feedback, and the use of a well-defined lesson evaluation toolkit.

Specific areas of focus this session included Cognitive Load Theory, making thinking visible and behaviour management. Staff professional development in these areas has included shared reading and discussion, voluntary workshops, whole-staff training sessions (which many Primary school colleagues also attended), peer observation and coaching conversations. As a result of this, almost all staff have improved classroom practice in relation to one or more of these areas.

Attainment

Key quotes from HMle Summary of Visit:

- Senior leaders and staff have taken a strategic and well-considered approach to planning for improvements in attainment and achievement.
- Senior leaders and staff are identifying, tracking and monitoring young people's achievements robustly.

Specific activities designed to raise attainment have included:

- Insight training sessions for all teaching staff and school leaders
- The development of an improved whole-school S4-6 tracking system
- Improved analysis and discussion of tracking data
- Improved interventions as a result of tracking data discussion and analysis
- The development of faculty Raising Attainment Plans
- The appointment of a Principal Teacher: Raising Attainment & Curriculum Enhancement
- A shift from the use of 'target grades' to 'predicted grades' in S4-6
- A continued and enhanced focus on developing student and staff understanding of the science of how we learn
- Improving our communication with parents in terms of how students are progressing. This has included by further strengthening student Learning Logs and use of our weekly Heads Up bulletin to parents
- Improvements to our homework programme across all year groups

- The introduction of end-of-year assessments for S1-3 students (with both formative and summative functions)

Curriculum

Key quotes from HMIE Summary of Visit:

- The curriculum is now providing a wider range of experiences and pathways for young people. This is helping to increase their motivation to learn by being more responsive to their needs.
- Work with partners is leading to the development of more flexible pathways to meet the needs of all young people. Partners demonstrate a very good understanding of the needs of particular groups and individuals that they work with. Partners talk positively about the effectiveness of partnership working and note that staff are keen to engage in developing a greater range of opportunities for young people.

We have introduced new courses for all year groups. These include:

- Drama (in the Broad General Education and Senior Phase)
- Citizenship (this was piloted with S6 last session and has now be introduced for all year groups)
- A range of National Progression Award (NPA) courses to the senior phase, including Bee Keeping and Criminology
- A range of additional National Course qualifications, including Politics and Classics.

Following discussion with Education Scotland, we have implemented an improved 1+2 languages model that better reflects national expectations in this area.

We have continued to develop our knowledge-based curriculum for S1-3 students, which has been published on our school website. Staff have been developing 'knowledge organisers' to support independent learning and parental engagement in learning.

In partnership with Primary school colleagues, we have been developing a Second Level knowledge-based curriculum for French and Science.

We have expanded our Enhanced Provision area, to include an outdoor classroom, sensory room and additional classrooms. Where appropriate, Enhanced Provision students are participating in learning experiences with students from the wider school.

In addition, we have:

- Designed a revised S4-6 curriculum model, built around long (6 periods per week) and short (3 periods per week) courses. With this, we are improving the personalisation and choice available to students.
- Implemented an integrated Health & Wellbeing course for S1-3 students, with a particular focus on strengthening what we have previously referred to as Personal & Social Education (PSE).
- Improved our partnership working with Community Learning & Development, which includes off-site learning opportunities for targeted students, enhancing their curriculum.
- Introduced an Enrichment programme for S5&6 students, which includes physical education, practical cookery, personal finance and Duke of Edinburgh.
- Introduced a more rigorous volunteering programme for S6 students.
- Expanded our community partnership links, including with Marchmont House and via a very successful Careers Fair in the summer term.
- Expanded our wider partnership links, including via the Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI), a range of improving literacy initiatives led by our school librarian, and Samling Academy.

Ethos

Key quotes from HMIE Summary of Visit:

- The school environment now offers a calm and orderly context for young people's learning. Staff are highly visible and approachable, and almost all young people demonstrate maturity, respect and courtesy in classes, social areas, and outside the school.
- Significant improvements have been made to teachers' professional learning in relation to learning, teaching and assessment. Improvements have also been made to tracking and monitoring young people's progress in learning, developing flexible curriculum pathways, and

<p>providing increased options for wider achievement and leadership. All these improvements continue to support a culture of raising attainment while closing the poverty-related gap.</p>
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Our school continues to feel calm, orderly and purposeful. In an October 2021 whole-school survey sampling around a quarter students and spanning all year groups:

- *Almost all* students reported that they feel safe at school and that the school supports them to feel safe
- Almost all students reported that staff treat them fairly and with respect

In a similar survey completed by teaching and support staff:

- *Almost all staff* reported that they found the school a rewarding place to work
- *Almost all staff* reported that they felt valued as a member of the school community
- *Almost all staff* reported that the school is well-led and managed

We have further strengthened our in-school professional learning offer for staff. This has included:

- Expanding our voluntary lunchtime workshop offer, with workshops offered four times a week
- Introducing a fortnightly Support for Learning workshop programme for staff
- A strengthened peer observation and coaching programme
- Inviting Primary school colleagues to participate in our professional learning programme

We the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, we have been able to re-introduce a wide selection of extracurricular opportunities, including clubs, sports, trips and shows.

The easing of restrictions have also enabled us to start to form partnerships with other schools, to the benefit of both students and staff. For example, in the summer term, we have had ‘sharing good practice’ visits with Jordanhill School and Robert Gordon’s College.

Improvements for students

Specific improvements for students have included:

- The quality of in-class teaching
- The quality of the content of our curriculum
- The range of courses on offer in the Broad General Education
- The range of courses available to choose in the Senior Phase
- The opportunities for personalisation and choice within the curriculum
- The quality of our homework programme
- The quality of our tracking & reporting systems
- The quality of our supported study programme
- The quality of our extracurricular activities programme

Next steps

We will continue to be guided by our PACE improvement model. Our specific areas of focus are outlined in our 2022-23 Improvement Plan.

Quality Indicator Evaluations

Quality Indicators		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
1.3	Leadership of change	Unsatisfactory	Good	Very good
2.3	Learning, teaching and assessment	Weak	Good	Good
3.1	Raising attainment and achievement	Weak	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
3.2	Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Weak	Good	Good