
**PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT – SCHOOLS
(BERWICKSHIRE HIGH SCHOOL)**

Report by Director – Education & Lifelong Learning

Education Sub-Committee

2 March 2023

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 This report proposes that the Committee considers His Majesty’s Inspector of Education (HMIE) Reports for Berwickshire High School and the continuous scrutiny and support provided by the Quality Improvement Team within Scottish Borders Council.

1.2 Summary of the main points of the Report.

- a) Initial inspection of Berwickshire High School by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in March 2019 noted significant concerns in a number of areas, including leadership, safeguarding, learning and teaching, wellbeing and attainment with areas noted for immediate action.
- b) Follow-up visit by HMIE in November 2021 reported significant improvement under the leadership and direction of the new Headteacher. The Report confirmed that HMIE would not undertake a further visit, but would ask the Local Authority to review and Report on continued progress.
- c) After a period of monitoring and support by the Quality Improvement Team, a review took place in November 2022 to validate progress made and to report back to HMIE and Education Scotland.
- d) The Team recognised significant additional progress and improvement made by the Headteacher and staff.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that the Committee approves the Local Authority and Education Scotland’s recommendation that Berwickshire High School can be fully signed off as a school of concern following intensive periods of improvement.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education

His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) are part of Education Scotland, a national body who carry out scrutiny activities in all schools and settings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, all inspection activity ceased so there has been a time delay in the scrutiny activities carried out. This has allowed time for the school to lead the areas of improvement identified and to ensure measurable impact of these.

3.2 Scottish Borders Council Quality Improvement Framework

- a) The Education (Scotland) Act 2016, The Standard's in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 (amended to include the National Improvement Framework), place direct responsibility on Local Authorities to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education which is provided by the schools managed by it.
- b) The Quality Improvement Team has a relentless focus on supporting and challenging continuous improvement in schools and settings to ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people.

4 REPORT EVIDENCE FROM HMIE AND LOCAL AUTHORITY

4.1 Berwickshire High School – Initial Inspection

- (a) The initial Inspection Report by HMIE was published on 23 April 2019, with a small number of strengths identified and further clear recommendations for improvement across all 4 quality indicators which were inspected.
- (b) The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work:
 - i. The Enhanced Provision Department, which is very effective in meeting the needs of young people with severe and complex additional support needs. Highly personalised learning and teaching engages young people successfully and supports them to attain and achieve. The clear shared vision of staff is based on promoting independence, social inclusion, healthy attitudes and positive behaviours.
 - ii. The well-designed school facilities, supported by a striking outdoor setting, offer strong opportunities to develop creative learning activities across the school.
- (c) The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the Headteacher and a representative from Scottish Borders Council:
 - i. There is an urgent need to improve leadership at all levels across the school. This includes engaging all young people, parents and staff in reviewing the vision, values and aims with a view of developing a strong identity, with clear attention given to the direction and expectations for Berwickshire High School.
 - ii. Senior leaders should ensure that, as a key priority, there is a whole school focus on creating a calm, safe and purposeful learning environment, which is conducive to high quality learning. This strong focus should include fostering positive relationships across the school and ensuring that there is much greater consistency in the promotion of high expectations at all times with clear boundaries set.

- iii. All staff should develop an agreed shared understanding of what high quality learning, teaching and assessment looks like and ensure they apply these standards consistently across the school at all times. Further development of approaches to tracking and monitoring young people's progress, especially in the broad general education, are needed. This will enable staff to put in place clearer next steps in learning for young people to enable them develop the skills and attributes needed for life and work.
- iv. Staff should develop curriculum pathways, as already agreed, at all stages, including with partners, to promote challenge, provide more flexibility for learners and meet their needs and aspirations. The addition of well-considered vocational pathways is key to enable some young people to succeed. This will take account of national priorities and learner entitlements.
- v. The wellbeing indicators, such as being safe, nurtured, achieving, respected and responsible, need to be embedded in the everyday work of the school. Young people need support to understand their relevance and to use them well, to enable learners to take responsibility for their own wellbeing.
- vi. All staff should continue their work to raise standards of attainment and provide wider opportunities for achievement to improve outcomes for young people. This includes identifying those young people who may miss out, through taking part in few or no wider achievement activities. We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using 4 quality indicator.

4.2 **Berwickshire High School – Follow Up Visit**

A second visit by HMIE to Berwickshire High School noted significant improvements in all areas, with the second Report being published on 18 January 2022. This Report noted the very positive impact of the new Headteacher's leadership and the progress made by the staff team. The Inspectorate asked Scottish Borders Council Officers to report progress within one year of the second visit.

4.3 **Berwickshire High School – Scottish Borders Council Review**

In November 2022, a team of Officers from Scottish Borders Council visited the school to validate the improvements made and to quality assure the progress made over the last 12 months. The team met with staff and young people, observed lessons and reviewed all aspects of the school's progress with the initial recommendations of the HMIE Report in 2019. In January 2023, the Chief Officer, the Quality Improvement Manager and the Headteacher met with the Head of Scrutiny for HMIE to give their report. Following a lengthy professional discussion, HMIE endorsed the Local Authority's report and agreed to a final sign off from HMIE.

5 **IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 **Financial**

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The report fully describes all the elements of risk that have been identified in relation to this project and no specific additional concerns need to be addressed.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and there is no requirement for a full IIA to be completed in relation to this report.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals

There is no impact/difference to sustainable development goals.

5.5 Rural Proofing

Not applicable.

5.6 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to be made to the Scheme of Delegation which need to be made following the recommendations of this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Lesley Munro

Director – Education & Lifelong Learning

Author(s)

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Background Papers:

SBC Follow Through Report Berwickshire HS January 2023
HMIE Record of Inspection 2019
HMIE Follow Up Letter 2021

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Christian Robertson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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