



# **Earlston High School**

## **School Improvement Report**

### **2024-25**



## Review of Progress 2024-25

### Context of the Setting

Earlston High School is a non-denominational, six-year secondary school located in the town of Earlston. We are proud to serve eight partner primary schools: Channelkirk, Earlston, Gordon, Lauder, Melrose, Newtown St Boswells, St Boswells, and Westruther. In addition, we welcome a significant number of placing requests each year. Our school roll for session 2024/2025 is 1,075.

### Vision and Values

Our vision at Earlston High School is to “learn together, grow together”, empowering every member of our school community to become the very best version of themselves whilst acknowledging that we achieve this collaboratively. We are committed to helping every young person reach their full potential.

As an inclusive, dynamic, and ambitious school, we set high standards and expectations for all. In 2024, through meaningful collaboration with young people, staff, families, and partners, we co-created a refreshed set of core values that reflect our shared aspirations: **Ambition, Kindness, and Respect**. These values are at the heart of everything we do and are championed by our Pupil Parliament and the wider school community.

### Facilities

Our campus is managed to a high standard by Amey Facilities Management. The school boasts outstanding facilities, including:

- 62 modern classrooms including a recently refreshed ICT suite alongside a new e-Sports suite
- Two nurture bases and a sensory room
- Assembly hall
- Two gym halls and a large sports hall
- Library and dedicated study room
- Extensive conference and meeting facilities
- Cosy Café – a designated safe space
- A well-established school garden and outdoor learning area

With generous support from the Earlston community, our school garden has flourished. It plays a central role in delivering Senior Phase Horticulture and supports practical learning in Home Economics and Pupil Support.

### Staffing

Our team of dedicated professionals is committed to ongoing professional learning and delivering high-quality teaching and learning experiences. The school has the equivalent of 71 full-time teaching staff.

Our Senior Leadership Team includes the Headteacher, three Depute Headteachers, and a Business Support Manager. The Extended Leadership Team is composed of:

- 8 Principal Teachers of Curriculum
- 7 Principal Teachers of Pupil Support
- 1 Principal Teacher of Leadership
- 1 Principal Teacher of Pedagogy

Our work is further supported by pupil support assistants, a librarian, administrative staff, technicians, and our facilities and catering teams.

### **Partnerships**

We maintain strong partnerships with our cluster primary schools, Borders College, local employers, and a range of external agencies including: Quarriers, Community Learning and Development, Beyond Earlston, local chaplains, Skills Development Scotland, Social Work, Health, and Police Scotland.

Our Quarriers worker is based in school full-time, and we benefit from a part-time Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) coordinator.

We value and nurture our relationships with the wider community. Annual highlights include our popular afternoon tea for senior citizens, representing the school at the local Remembrance service and putting on well-attended Christmas concerts and Summer Shows. The return of live pupil performances has further strengthened community ties. The school also offers evening and holiday lets, supporting a variety of local groups.

### **Extra-Curricular**

Our thriving extra-curricular programme provides a wide range of opportunities for all young people. From competitive sports to theatre productions, educational excursions to social events, we offer something for everyone. We actively encourage pupil voice, and new clubs or activities are welcomed and supported.

### **Attendance and Exclusion**

In session 2024/25, our pupil attendance rate was 91.1%. Earlston High School is the only school in Scottish Borders Council to have improved attendance each month for 2024-25 compared to 2023-24.

- Overall attendance has increase by 1.1% compared to last year and persistent absence has reduced by an amazing 9.6%.
- This equates to roughly 103 additional children attending school more that 90% of the time!
- Care experienced young people (19) attendance up 1.6% overall and persistent absence down 13.6%
- Those claiming free school meals (100) up 2.5% overall and persistent absence down 12.2%

Seven young people were temporarily excluded, including one who was excluded on two occasions which is a reduction of 61% compared to session 2023-24.

### **Scottish Attainment Challenge**

Through the Scottish Attainment Challenge, we received £45,325 in Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). This funding enabled the employment of additional Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs), who deliver a range of interventions focused on improving attendance, wellbeing, and learning outcomes for targeted young people.

### **Website**

We re-launched our new school website and social media channels to showcase and celebrate the learning, achievements, and opportunities we provide for our young people.

## **PRIORITY 1**

Develop high quality learning, teaching and assessment that leads to improved levels of attainment (including the poverty related gap) and achievement for all in our schools and settings through continued development of;

- Pedagogy and practice: year 2 of SBC Way
- Curricular programmes and learner pathways
- Digital skills for all
- Tracking and monitoring

### **Pedagogy and practice: year 2 of SBC Way**

#### **How well are you doing? What's working well for your learners?**

We have focused on Learning Intentions (LI), Success Criteria (SC) and Cold Calling as a questioning technique. These have all had short inputs to staff and pupils had an introduction to what Cold Calling was and why we use it during the August 2024 INSET Days

#### **Earlston's Excellent Learning Framework**

We have taken time this year to restructure Earlston's Excellent Learning Framework. This has been the key focus of the Pedagogy Group with input from staff across the school, pupils through the focus groups and redesign of the front page by pupils in N5 Graphic Communication. We have looked outwards and visited Queen Anne High School in Dunfermline to see how they had developed their L&T framework.

#### **How do you know? What evidence do you have of positive impact on learners?**

##### **Faculty Self-Evaluation**

Self-evaluation in faculties indicated the following:

- **English:** Strong LI/SC use; structured thinking time in lessons.
- **Technologies:** Starters are progressing; increased use of cold calling.
- **Humanities:** Green rating for LI/SC; cohesive faculty approach.
- **Languages:** Confident in LI/SC application; developing starter techniques.
- **Maths:** LI/SC reinforced using "My Turn / Your Turn"; early stages but positive.
- **Science:** Good use of LI/SC. Still work to be done clarifying at all levels. Differentiated cold calling successful.

##### **Pupil evaluation**

Pupil focus groups indicated that almost all teachers used Cold Calling as a questioning technique and participants in the focus groups were familiar with what this was and why it was used.

They indicated that most teachers used LI and starters in lessons.

Pupils were less familiar with SC but those who were found it particularly helpful to have examples of what success could look like in the form of worked examples, exemplars and having clear indications of what to do to improve.

#### **What are you going to do now? What are your improvement priorities in this area?**

- **Closing the Learning Loop** – Continue our focus on the start of lessons but ensure there is a clear link to the end of the lesson. We will launch the new Learning Framework to

all staff in August 2025 to help support staff with this. Introduction of more collegiate time and sharing of good practice at faculty meetings and at ELT.

- **Professional Learning Communities** – These will provide staff with a framework to work together on pedagogical themes they identify as a priority in their own practice.
- **Showbie as a Classroom Tool** - Develop the best approach to using Showbie as a tool to allow pupils to reflect on their learning and the skills they are developing.

### Curricular programmes and learner pathways

#### How well are you doing? What's working well for your learners?

We have focused on ensuring our learners and parents/carers are fully aware of the curricular pathways available to learners. We have published all our pathways on our new website in an engaging video format.

We increased the learning time for subjects in S3 – pupils now study 3 periods a week of 7 choices.

#### SCQF Accreditation and Ambassadors

We have appointed SCQF Ambassadors and are well on our way to attaining Silver status. We have established clear pathway documents for all subjects and have promoted new courses at all S2/3/4/5 parents' evenings, course choice information events and in course choice discussions.

#### New Courses

In 2025 we introduced new courses into S3 – Engineering Skills, Science Pathway and Social Subjects Pathway.

S4- Social Subjects Pathway (L4 Modern Studies and History together), Business and IT Level 5 (strong uptake in both in 2025/26)

Employability and Enterprise has been introduced and is delivered in partnership with CLD.

#### How do you know? What evidence do you have of positive impact on learners?

The introduction of qualifications from across the SCQF has added an average attainment of 4%. For example, with SQA National Awards only, S4 student attainment of 5+ Level 5 is 60% of the cohort. With the addition of SCQF attainment, this jumps to 64.5%. Similarly, those attaining 4+ level 4 of SQA National courses are 75.5% of the cohort; this jumps to 79.5% when the totality of awards are included.

In Mathematics, the introduction of Applications of Mathematics has seen an increase 2024 in Level 5 Numeracy attainment in S5 (a high of 87.71% compared to our Virtual Comparator at 84%). Numeracy level 5 attainment in S4 is predicted to be above our previous high of 85% in 2023.

- NPA Creative Industries – Junk Kouture
- Reduction in discipline referrals in S3 – curriculum impact
- Reduction in re-coursing requests for new S4

#### What are you going to do now? What are your improvement priorities in this area?

For session 2025-26 we have introduced SCQF Level 6 (Higher) Administration & IT to ensure that there is a full pathway to Higher in this subject area.

We have appointed a Teacher of Computing Science therefore we will be able to offer Computing Science to SCQF Level 6 (Higher) for session 2025-26. Our new eSports suite will provide the resources for us to deliver NPA in eSports up to SCQF Level 6.

For session 2025-26 we have introduced Applications of Maths to SCQF Level 6 (Higher) therefore providing an alternative or additional maths pathway to Higher.

We have introduced the following short courses for wider achievement and enrichment:

- Climate Change and Sustainability L4
- Music Technology L5
- Young Enterprise L5
- Film and Media L5
- Bike Maintenance L3/4
- Personal Finance L4/5/6
- Biology Short Course - Life on Earth L5
- Plant Health L4
- Powering Futures L6
- Barista Skills L5

### Digital Skills for all

#### **How well are you doing? What's working well for your learners?**

All students and families are now connected on Showbie and it has been used to share pupil reflections on learning with home and there have been some staff using it with classes or individuals.

Apple Classroom has been relaunched, and staff are being supported to get all classes connected.

Quizzing for retrieval practice is used widely across the school.

Flexibility exists within faculties and departments as to how they best utilise digital technology to enhance teaching and learning. For example:

- Business Studies – fully digital across all year groups, utilising OneNote for coursework and feedback.
- Mathematics – OneNote used consistently across the faculty for coursework and feedback.
- Horticulture – use of Showbie for evidence, tracking and monitoring
- Physics and Chemistry – Excel Learning Logs to allow pupils to track and monitor their own progress
- Pupil Support – using Showbie to evidence pupil progress and share with home on a monthly basis.
- PE – use of camera to record and support the analysis of skill development
- Art and Photography – use of OneNote and Showbie by pupils to track and review progress.

A small group of teachers are trialling the use of Artificial Intelligence to enhance content creation as well as to support pedagogical approaches to teaching.

The school invested in the online revision tool, ACHIEVE, to support learners in S4-6. Since this was introduced, there have been 4225 individual pupil visits to this resource with a total of 221,131 questions answered. SCHOLAR is also utilised to support learners in S4-6 with course notes and revision tools.

**How do you know? What evidence do you have of positive impact on learners?**

Showbie is also being used to support learners who are not attending. This is allowing them to access materials and share work with teachers in a private space that they have reported finding more manageable and less overwhelming.

**What are you going to do now? What are your improvement priorities in this area?**

We have set up a working group to prototype the use of Showbie as a classroom tool with a focus on looking outwards through visits to other SBC secondary schools who are using Showbie in a variety of ways.

STEM day with Inspire to be planned for September/October to allow pupils to become more confident and proficient in the use of iPads as a classroom tool.

We have set up a working group trialling the use of Artificial Intelligence to trial and then support colleagues in how it can be used to enhance teaching and learning.

**PRIORITY 2**

Develop inclusive practice with a focus on universal and targeted provision in all schools and settings through continued development of;

- Inclusive, nurturing practice and promotion of wellbeing
- Universal and targeted supports for all learners

**How well are you doing? What's working well for your learners?**

Our three Attendance Support Officers play a vital role in supporting young people and, when appropriate, their families to engage more positively with school and learning. Learners experiencing heightened levels of anxiety are now able to access a designated Pupil Support Classroom as an alternative to going home, helping to maintain their connection with school.

Our Learning and Wellbeing Hub provides targeted support to support pupils regulate their emotions and behaviours. Through pupil-centred approaches to learning, we have seen increased engagement, improved attendance, and notable attainment gains. All young people accessing this resource have achieved at least one SCQF Level 4 qualification.

As a result of our Attendance Officers in collaboration with our Learning and Wellbeing Hub attendance for our Care Experienced young people has risen by 1.6% overall and persistent absence down 13.6%.

We have expanded our targeted curriculum with the introduction of three new courses: Practical Cookery, Hairdressing, and Creative Industries. These have been particularly beneficial for a group of eight pupils identified as being at risk of not progressing to a positive post-school destination.

Supported work experience has been introduced as a targeted intervention for a group of S3 and S4 pupils. This has enhanced their career planning and preparedness for the world of work. Plans are now in place to ensure that participants gain accreditation through the SQA Work Placement Award.

Residential trips for S3 pupils have been successfully re-established, with most of S3 participating. An inclusive alternative programme of excursions and activities was delivered for those who did not attend the residential.

**How do you know? What evidence do you have of positive impact on learners?**

- Parental surveys identified that the majority of parents reported their child enjoys school, feel their child is safe and agreed that staff treat their child fairly and respectfully.
- Monthly 14+ Transitions meetings and associated minutes demonstrate that almost all S4 pupils, who were at risk of not having a positive destination post EHS, have had greater success in finding pathways and securing positive destinations. Continued collaboration with partner agencies for those few young people who require additional support to achieve a positive post-school destination is actively taking place.
- For a targeted S4 group who were in danger of not achieving a qualification in Literacy and/or Numeracy they have all achieved this.
- Informal feedback from S4 pupils and parents is positive and parents are very appreciative of the support offered to their young person.
- Informal feedback from staff regarding some pupils with ASN, who find school challenging, highlighted the inclusive nature of the trips. Pupil feedback matched that from staff.
- A few young people engaged with outreach support and are now working towards qualifications.

**What are you going to do now? What are your improvement priorities in this area?**

We are looking to appoint two additional Attendance Officers to bring the total to five. This will enable us to complete our "Team around the House" structure where, for each House in Earlston High School, there will be a dedicated Principal Teacher of Guidance, Pupil Support Teacher and Attendance Officer to oversee pastoral and learning support of young people in their respective House ensuring all young people and their families feel fully supported.

**Evaluate the following QIs against the six-point 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

Quality indicator	School self-evaluation
1.3 Leadership of change	Good
2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment (Including digital)	Good
3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equity and inclusion	Good
3.2 Raising attainment and achievement/ Securing children’s progress	Very Good

**Our capacity for continuous improvement is: Very Good**