

PENICUIK HIGH SCHOOL

Review of Student Support

A formal review was carried out at Penicuik High during November 2021 which focused on two key aspects of the school's work.

- *Personalised Support* - processes to support students and help them overcome barriers to their learning so they can achieve success.
- *Wellbeing, Equity and Inclusion* - promoting and ensuring the wellbeing of students, including physical and mental health, and ensuring that all students feel safe, listened to, cared for, and included.

The Review Process

The review team comprised members of Penicuik HS staff, along with parent and student representatives, staff from other Midlothian schools with specialist knowledge of the areas under review, education consultants and representatives from partner agencies.

Feedback was gathered through face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, shadowing students, reviewing policies, and through an online survey. School staff, parents and carers, partner agencies and young people all contributed meaningfully to the review.

School Context

In evaluating the work of the school, it is important to highlight the impact of the two extended periods of school closure in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid 19 which caused significant disruption to the pace of change. Despite these phases of interruption and recovery, the school has succeeded in taking forward important developments in Student Support, for example changes to Guidance staffing levels, increased interventions within Support for Learning (SfL), and investing in a behaviour support base (TLC) which focuses on nurture and behaviour interventions.

A restructure of the House responsibilities within the senior leadership team (SLT) was carried out

to provide more targeted support for both staff and students and improving quality assurance of practice.

Universal Support

The review found that staff at all levels are committed to providing effective support for all learners and are aware of their role in helping learners to achieve success. In session 2020-21 Penicuik HS supported almost all school leavers (97%) into positive destinations.

Feedback from focus groups and the online survey indicates that almost all staff have supportive and caring relationships with young people. Most learners feel they get the right amount of support from their teachers and that they know how to access support. Most learners feel the work they are given stretches them and challenges them to achieve their best.

While there is evidence that universal support is having a positive impact on the progression of learners, there are aspects which need to be strengthened. A significant number of learners do not feel that school staff know them well enough - the way they learn, their achievements and interests. Most learners report that the school does not involve them sufficiently in decisions about their learning and in planning their next steps. Most learners feel they do not have regular opportunities to talk to an adult in the school who knows them well. It's important, however, to recognise that some of these issues have been created or influenced by the pandemic and will naturally improve in the future.

Targeted Support

The school provides targeted support for students in different ways, depending on their needs. This includes giving learners access to additional resources and materials, allocating classroom or pupil support assistants, providing access to a quiet space or support base and by adapting the curriculum.

Support plans, including individualised educational programmes (IEPs) in place for children who require them. Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSPs) are produced for young people with the most complex and enduring

additional support needs, and where a high degree of coordination of support from education service agencies and other agencies is required.

The school operates various systems for storing confidential information to ensure the necessary supports are implemented. Feedback from staff, however, highlighted the need to improve systems for sharing confidential information and referral procedures.

Support for Learning

Support for Learning staff have a good knowledge of the range of needs including autism, ADHD and other neurological disorders, the needs of looked after children and children in kinship care. Once a young person is supported within school, there is a high level of tailored support. There is acknowledgement amongst staff and parents that a high percentage of Penicuik children have additional needs (36%). The challenges of this for planning and supporting students and in allocating resources have been recognised by school leaders who have strengthened specialist provision for children with additional needs.

Feedback from teachers and parents during the review highlighted the need for more clarity about the way that students with additional needs are identified and supported. Some staff felt that referral processes needed to be more efficient and responsive. Feedback also highlighted the need for greater clarity about how Support for Learning and Guidance departments work together to improve integration of support activities and improve outcomes for young people.

Members of the Learning Assistant (LA) team bring a wide range of valuable skills and experience to their role. Most of their time is allocated to in-class support. Most teachers work well with them and value their contribution to meeting the needs of young people.

Wellbeing, Inclusion and Equality

Partnership Working

The school works effectively with a range of partners to identify and reduce the impact of

barriers to learning. There are many examples of effective partnership working which have improved outcomes for young people, for example interagency work with MYPAS, FOCUS and CAMHS. Regular child planning meetings take place, along with as wellbeing, transition and 16+ meetings. Targeted transition meetings ensure that students with the highest level of need (ASN, ASD, and SEBN) have clear supports and pathways to positive destinations. The school is currently tightening up recording processes for informal meetings and to better ensure that meetings align with GIRFEC principles.

The school works well with Communities and Lifelong Learning (CLL) and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to ensure young people move into positive destinations and to support transitions. This partnership working has resulted in enhanced student support through counselling, small group work provision, one-to-one support, and employability support for young people.

The school also works effectively with other professionals including the Council's education psychology service, health workers and local police, to develop a sound knowledge of young people, their families and specific needs they may have. The school's SDS careers advisor worked very well with Student Support staff to provide tailored support to young people during the closure periods.

The Learning Centre

The school's newly established Learning Centre (TLC) offers specialist support for any young person struggling to maintain their place in a mainstream classroom but who does not fit the criteria for allocation of a place in Midlothian's complex needs or enhanced nurture bases. The TLC has since worked successfully to support students who had been non-attenders to re-engage with education and achieve the award of SQA qualifications. Almost all students feel the TLC makes a positive contribution to their learning and most feel safe and well supported.

SfL Hub and Sensory Room

In March 2021, a SfL Hub was established to provide additional targeted support to young people to address learning gaps and barriers to

learning. Of 72 young people targeted between March and June 2021, 52 took up the offer of Hub support and this enabled them to achieve SQA qualifications they had been at risk of failing to achieve.

The school has also recently established a Sensory Room, specifically designed to provide an ASD friendly, de-escalation safe space to help manage increased levels of student anxiety. The room has been well used since opening and initial feedback is very positive.

Youth Work

The employment of a youth worker funded from the school PEF allocation, provides soft start, one-to-one sessions, group work, and in-class support for students who need social, emotional and behavioural support. Feedback from young people and parents have been positive about the support offered and there is evidence that students have been helped to re-engage more positively in classes.

Care Experienced Young People

Care experienced young people are well supported. They receive individually tailored programmes which give young people every opportunity to reach their potential and secure a positive destination. Feedback confirms that care-experienced young people are well supported.

Wellbeing

Staff at all levels are committed to improving the wellbeing of learners. Across the school, there is a strong awareness of the need to further support the mental health and wellbeing of staff and young people, and that the Covid-19 pandemic continues to have an impact.

Relationships between staff and pupils at Penicuik High are positive and based on mutual respect. Staff care about young people and want to do the best for them. Most staff understand restorative approaches and use them to prevent any incidences of poor behaviour from escalating. Most young people feel safe and know who to go to if they need help.

Restructuring roles and responsibilities is helping to promote integrated working and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for students.

There remains scope for the school to develop an improved understanding of wellbeing amongst young people and for staff to use the wellbeing indicators in all aspects of school life. Further professional learning for staff will strengthen knowledge help develop understanding of their role in promoting wellbeing.

Guidance

Guidance staff know young people and their families well. Overall, they respond well to parental calls for support for young people in crisis. The Guidance team has recently introduced systems to track the progress of vulnerable young people. However, teaching staffs' knowledge and understanding of school Guidance systems, and of the purposes and procedures for support provision such as the Learning Hub and the TLC is variable.

In the current Penicuik HS support model, young people and staff are not always able to access Guidance staff who also have a subject teaching timetable. Some students do not see their guidance teacher on a weekly basis.

Personal and Social Education

The review highlighted a lack of consistency and, to some extent, relevance of the school's current PSE programmes. Feedback indicates that most students do not value PSE lessons. Not all students are taught PSE at S5/6 or have weekly timetabled time with their Guidance teacher at other levels due to timetable constraints. The PSE program needs to be revised and updated to better meet the needs of all learners.

Attendance

Some attendance procedures post pandemic lockdown periods have been revised to ensure safeguarding of young people at the school. A pilot of the new procedures was launched in September 2021 with S1-S3. Registration teachers monitor day to day attendance closely

and follow this up with young people. Guidance staff follow up on those with patterns of absence.

as part of wider work on equalities and inclusion is needed.

Inclusion

There is commitment to further improving the ethos and ensuring inclusive practice across the school. The school's PRIDE values and its commitment to the UNCRC underpin this work. The school has achieved the Rights Respecting Schools Bronze Award. This values-based approach is evident in the new draft Anti-Bullying and Positive Behaviour policies, the latter due for implementation in 2022.

Over the past three years, the school has made clear steps towards becoming more inclusive through the provision of more targeted supports to enable learners to engage in their education. The Guidance Hub and Club 55 both provide breakfast, lunch and snacks for vulnerable young people which is supporting them to engage more with their learning throughout the day.

Partnerships

Relationships with partners are very good. The schools works very well with Communities and Lifelong Learning and Skills Development Scotland to ensure young people move into positive destinations and have support with transitions.

The school works effectively in partnership with Midlothian Young Carers to meet all statutory requirements and to provide Young Carers with support. Supports in place for Care Experienced Young People are strong. Young people benefit from positive and proactive partnership working with the Midlothian Champions' Board.

Celebrating Diversity

Overall, young people feel that the school's approaches to celebrating success are inclusive and recognise a range of ways in which they can achieve.

While there are examples where diversity is promoted and celebrated in the school, the development of a whole-school approach to this

STRENGTHS

1. There is a high level of satisfaction with the positive leadership shown by the school's Senior Leadership Team. Most respondents to the survey feel the school is now benefitting from a more inclusive ethos and that it is in a good place to implement new initiatives and improve its practices.
2. Almost all staff have very supportive and caring relationships with young people. Most learners feel they are well supported by their teachers and know how to access support.
3. There are many examples of effective interagency working which have enhanced the nature of support for young people and reduced barriers to learning. Students with the highest level of need have clear supports and pathways to positive destinations.
4. The Teaching and Learning Centre and Club 55 have had a positive initial impact, and both have the potential to deliver high quality support. The Sensory Room contributes well to de-escalation and reducing anxiety in students.
5. Care experienced young people are very well supported by a dedicated Care Experienced Co-ordinator.
6. Members of the Learning Assistant team bring a wide range of valuable skills and experience to their role.
7. Almost all students reported that they received high quality support from their teachers and support staff during the enforced periods of school closure due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

ASPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Building on work already underway, the school should implement a fully integrated model of student support.
2. Building on work already underway, streamlined and bureaucracy-light processes

and procedures should be put in place to ensure consistency and quality of practice around student support.

3. There needs to be better joint working and common purpose between the school's support provision to ensure that the work of SfL, TLC and Guidance are fully aligned with the school's overall vision for Student Support.
4. There should be greater clarity about the way students with additional needs are identified and supported.
5. Further work is required to strengthen the preparation and delivery of IEPs for learners with the most significant levels of need to ensure planned and progressive programmes of learning.
6. The school should continue to develop its tracking and monitoring processes to identify students at risk of not achieving and ensure there are targeted and timeous interventions.
7. Mainstream class teachers would benefit from further training to help them become more confident in working with ASN students and more able to meet their learning needs.
8. There is recognition that the PSE programme needs considerable redevelopment. PSE should be embedded in the curriculum weekly from S1-S6 and, wherever possible, be delivered by each student's Guidance teacher.
9. There needs to be improved understanding of wellbeing amongst students and staff through use of the wellbeing indicators in all aspects of school life. Young people should have meaningful opportunities to reflect on their wellbeing and the school should have robust tracking and monitoring in place to show how outcomes for young people are improving.