

26 August 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Doon Academy. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and East Ayrshire Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

Senior leaders and teachers need to make sure the needs of all young people are met in classes. They should develop a shared understanding of high-quality teaching and learning. Teachers should explore ways to adapt their methodology to increase young people's motivation to learn and provide activities with the right amount of challenge.

Overall, staff have made positive progress in this area for improvement.

The headteacher, senior leaders and staff have worked well together to begin to develop a stronger culture of learning. Staff are enthusiastic about the changes to their approaches to learning and teaching. Young people feel their teachers know them well, and that teachers adapt the learning to meet their needs more regularly. Staff have access to increased information about a young person's learning progress and are using this regularly to plan learning.

Senior leaders and staff have worked well together to begin to develop a shared understanding of what high quality learning and teaching looks like. They have developed Doon Academy's 'Five Components of an Effective Lesson' framework. This supports staff and young people to have a clearer understanding of the key components of an effective lesson. Young people have played a key role in this development, advising staff on creating a learner friendly version of the framework. This is supporting improvements in learning and teaching by clarifying expectations around the responsibilities of staff and young people. There is now a more consistent approach being used by teachers to share the focus of learning with young people. Young people are becoming more aware of how they can be successful in their learning.

Almost all young people consistently engage well with teachers in lessons. In a majority of lessons, young people have opportunities to learn actively and in collaboration with others.

School based professional learning has recently begun to focus on staff's use of teaching approaches that can be adapted to meet the needs of all learners. Staff should now look outwards, engaging with colleagues in other establishments, to further embed a range of effective methodologies when planning learning. This will support all staff in identifying clearly the features of high-quality learning and teaching.

Senior leaders and teachers must improve attainment for all young people, with a particular focus on numeracy. Teachers should track learners' progress across all stages and make sure young people and their parents understand the progress being made.

Overall, staff have made limited progress in this area for improvement.

Senior leaders have prioritised additional in class support for learners that focusses specifically on increasing attainment in literacy and numeracy. There has been a significant increase in the number of young people achieving Curriculum for Excellence third and fourth level during their broad general education (BGE). Staff with responsibility for numeracy have carried out work that has supported their understanding of standards for BGE. Senior leaders should ensure that plans to work with cluster schools to support the reliability and robustness of these levels is a priority moving forward.

Senior leaders have recently introduced a BGE monitoring and tracking tool. This is at the very early stages of being used across all curricular areas by teachers. It is too early to measure the impact of this development on the attainment levels for young people. Senior leaders should continue to monitor the impact this is having on ensuring each young person is making appropriate progress.

Senior leaders have adapted the existing senior phase tracker and all teachers have access to attainment information for all young people. This is supporting staff to better monitor progress across different subject areas. Class teachers are beginning to use this information as a way of working with other colleagues to identify good practice. Staff have a clearer understanding of their role in improving outcomes for young people.

Young people have regular meetings with a member of staff to discuss their progress and to help them to set targets for their learning. Young people feel that this is supporting them to feel more confident about their learning and to track their own progress.

It is too early to see the impact of the changes on raising attainment. Senior leaders are confident that these changes will increase attainment. They now need more time working with staff to ensure changes are embedded and the impact of these monitored and measured. Senior leaders have identified issues related to staff absence significantly impacted on attainment. Staffing issues have been addressed for this session and it is anticipated that this will support improved attainment this session.

Senior leaders and teachers should ensure that they are offering suitable programmes of learning, with a stronger focus on senior phase options. These programmes should allow all young people to maximise their learning and so improve outcomes for all.

Overall, staff have made positive progress in this area for improvement.

Senior leaders have led staff well through an initial audit of BGE courses with a clear focus on understanding how well courses were meeting the needs of all learners. BGE courses have now been mapped to reflect national standards. Progression pathways have been created for all curricular areas. This step supports staff to have a clearer understanding of the next steps in learning for all young people.

The senior phase curriculum has been reviewed and changes have been made to course choice options. The headteacher has introduced a presentation policy that supports staff to be ambitious for all learners. Staff are enthusiastic about the review of senior phase options and what courses they may be able to offer in the future. Teachers are enthused about the changes to the courses they offer and have a clearer understanding of how they can contribute to improving outcomes for all. However, it is too early to see the impact of these changes and senior leaders should monitor carefully the impact of the changes have on outcomes for young people.

Young people studying SQA Higher courses this session have six dedicated teaching periods for each subject. This is an increased time allocation of one additional period specifically for Higher subjects. S6 learners have identified this as a positive and supportive change.

Pupil Support staff are now more confident in using tracking data to support young people's progression. They are also using this information to help them inform young people and their parents of the best study pathways.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within 18 months of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement. This may include another inspection visit. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the improvements the school has made and outlining any further action, agreed with East Ayrshire Council that we intend to take.

Susan McDade
HM Inspector