

Summarised inspection findings

Mackie Academy

Aberdeenshire Council

13 May 2025

Key contextual information

School Name: Mackie Academy
Council: Aberdeenshire Council
SEED number: 5251931
Roll: 1117

Mackie Academy is led effectively by the headteacher, who is supported by four deputy headteachers.

Attendance has been above the national average for the last five years. Exclusions are generally in line with the national average.

In September 2023, 11 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2023, 5 per cent of pupils live in SIMD 1-5 of data zones in Scotland.

In September 2023, the school reported that 44.2 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Most young people and staff engage in respectful, relationships which help promote a supportive environment for learning. This is underpinned by shared classroom expectations demonstrated in 'The basics'. Most young people have a positive attitude to learning, and the majority of learners enjoy learning. Senior leaders' recent focus on developing project-based learning is supporting a minority of young people to participate more effectively with their learning. Teachers have begun to review the learning environments to help more young people engage readily in learning and be successful. Teachers are considering for example, how to ensure that information on classroom walls supports young people to be more confident and independent in their learning.
- The majority of teachers provide tasks, activities and resources which build well on young people's prior learning. Young people are enthusiastic and engaged in their learning where these are matched to young people's individual learning styles and needs. Tasks and activities are too often the same for the whole class and teaching is delivered at the same pace. This leads to a few young people disengaging from their learning or not being challenged sufficiently. Teachers should continue to ensure that learning is adapted appropriately and delivered at an appropriate pace to meet the needs of all young people more effectively.
- In a majority of lessons, young people respond well when they work in pairs or small groups. They enjoy learning where there is an appropriate balance of teacher-led and independent learning activities. In a few curriculum areas, teachers need to develop a wider range of teaching approaches, taking greater account of young people's individual needs.
- Mackie Academy's 'Learning Wheel', developed in consultation with staff and young people, set out expectations for high quality learning, teaching and assessment. This wheel, together with the associated toolkit, details seven key areas which staff strive to deliver consistently across the school, to achieve successful outcomes for young people. Teachers are at the early stages of using this toolkit to identify areas for their own development. In a few faculties this has led to improvements in the quality of starters at the beginning of lessons and in the quality of learner feedback.
- In almost all lessons teachers offer young people clear instructions and explanations of the tasks required. The majority of teachers share the purpose of learning and how young people will know if they have been successful in their learning. The quality of learning intentions and success criteria is variable across the school. Teachers should continue to build on the positive practice in a few curriculum areas to review and refine the purposes of learning. This should help young people articulate better why they are learning and the measures of success.

- Almost all teachers routinely use questioning to check for understanding and recall of information. In a minority of lessons teachers use a wider range of questioning techniques well to support young people's development of higher-order thinking skills. This leads to young people becoming increasingly independent, and curious in their learning.
- A few young people use digital tools to support their learning well in classes. Most young people recognise the increasing use of digital resources to support their learning at home. For example, digital resources can help young people access additional learning materials, review previous learning tasks or catch up on any learning missed through absence from school. Teachers should continue to develop their use of digital technologies to support all young people learn through, for example, greater use of assistive technologies.
- Almost all teachers have a strong understanding of progression within, and achievement of, a level in the BGE. Teachers in all subjects have developed 'Flight Paths' which support young people to chart their progress in learning and skills development in all curriculum areas. They have implemented a strategic approach to assessment planning, based on national Benchmarks. This ensures that most young people know the level they are working within in all subjects.
- Almost all teachers, in line with the school's assessment policy, use an increasingly wide range of summative and formative assessment well to help inform judgements about young people's progress. This creates an evidence base within a level and supports young people to self-assess and reflect on their learning. Teachers should now consider how to best use assessment evidence to adapt planning for learning to meet the needs of all young people.
- In the BGE, teachers use a variety of approaches to have learning conversations with young people. Senior leaders now need to develop a more consistent approach to engaging learners in conversations about their progress. This will further support young people to have a clear understanding of their next steps in learning across all subjects.
- Most young people in the senior phase value the feedback they receive from teachers following assessments. This helps them to understand their progress and consider their next steps for learning. Teachers need to ensure that young people in the senior phase are involved meaningfully in setting targets in all subjects.
- All teachers participate in moderation activities for planning, learning and assessment within faculties in the BGE and senior phase. Teachers also engage with colleagues across the local authority to support moderation. This supports teacher consistency in the application of national standards in the BGE and the senior phase.
- Teachers use a variety of methods well, to track and monitor young people's progress within all faculties. Faculty heads maintain an overview of progress and work with teachers to support individuals progress if they are not on track. Most teachers are confident in their use of data. This is leading to increased use of tracking information to inform their classroom planning and to support young people when considering their future pathways. Senior leaders should continue as planned to move all subject tracking over to the school's new system. This will ensure consistency in approach across the school.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

BGE

- Almost all young people achieve third CfE level or better in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. This level of achievement has been sustained between 2017/18 to 2023/24. Most young people in 2023/24 achieved CfE fourth level literacy and numeracy, with the exception of writing. School attainment results remain consistently above the local and national average between 2017/18 and 2023/24.
- English and mathematics staff work very effectively with primary staff on moderation, verification and literacy and numeracy pedagogy. This has improved staffs' confidence of a level and has improved consistency of approaches and assessment across the cluster. The literacy and numeracy levels of young people from P7 into the senior phase is tracked very well. Middle leaders in English and mathematics use this information very effectively to monitor progress of young people and to support planning of learning and teaching.

Senior phase

Leavers

Literacy

- Performance for leavers in literacy is strong at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better, with almost all young people achieving this between 2018/19 and 2022/23. The school generally performs significantly higher than the virtual comparator (VC) for SCQF level 5 or better. The majority of young people achieve SCQF level 6 or better. This is generally significantly lower than the VC between 2018/19 and 2022/23. The English department have introduced the SCQF level 6 communications course in session 2024/25. Senior leaders reported the positive impact this is projected to have on SCQF level 6 literacy.
- Almost all young people who require additional support with their learning achieve SCQF level 5 or better in literacy and a minority achieve SCQF level 6 or better. This is an improving picture between 2018/19 and 2022/23.

Numeracy

- Most young people leaving school in 2022/23, including young people who require additional support, achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. This has been in line with the VC between 2018/19 and 2022/23. A minority of young people leaving school between 2018/19 and 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 6 or better in numeracy. This is in line with the VC for three out of the five years, including 2022/23. There is no consistent pattern of improvement at SCQF level 5 or 6. Over the last three years higher applications of mathematics has been introduced to the curriculum which has started to increase attainment at SCQF level 6. A

targeted group of young people have been identified this year, 2024/25, to be presented for the numeracy level 6 standalone unit.

- Senior leaders and staff have implemented a very clear literacy and numeracy strategy which outlines clear roles, responsibilities and strategic aims. Young people's progress in literacy and numeracy is tracked and monitored over time from P7 through to the senior phase. Teachers use this to put in place effective interventions and use the information to inform planning of learning and teaching. This now supports senior leaders to ensure that all young people leave school with a literacy and numeracy qualification.

Cohorts

- At S4 most young people achieve SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. This is significantly higher than the VC for three of the five years, with the latest year 2023/24 in line with the VC. By S5 and S6, based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people achieve SCQF level 6 or better. This is generally significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC between 2019/20 and 2023/24.
- At S4, S5 and S6 based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people achieve SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, which is in line with the VC. A minority of young people in S5 and S6, based on the S4 roll, achieve SCQF level 6 or better. This is in line with the VC in 2023/24.
- In S4 the percentage of young people being presented for applications of mathematics and mathematics is slightly above the national average. Passes at A and B at national 5 are much higher than the national average. In S5/6 presentation levels for level 6 applications of maths and A and B passes are much higher than the national average. No young person is entered for mathematics and applications of maths within the same class. In S4-6 young people can choose two maths options in different columns.
- In S5/6 presentation levels for SCQF level 6 English are below the national average. Senior leaders, as a next step, should review and monitor the percentage of young people who are accessing literacy and English at SCQF level 6.

Attainment over time

BGE

- In 2023/24 almost all young people achieved CfE third level in all curricular areas by the end of S3. The majority of young people achieve CfE fourth level in most curricular areas. All teachers have been involved in professional learning on achievement of levels, assessment, data analysis and moderation in the BGE. As a result, teachers use a wider range of well-planned assessments and are confident in their judgement of a level.
- Senior leaders have implemented a whole school tracking and monitoring system for the BGE over the last three years. Senior leaders are able to monitor the progress of young people within a subject area, and across subject areas over time. Senior and middle leaders now use this information effectively to support course choice decisions.

Senior phase

Improving attainment for all Leavers

- When using average complimentary tariff points, the attainment of the lowest 20%, middle 60% and highest 20% of young people leaving school is broadly in line with the VC. Young people who require additional support for their learning are maintaining good levels of performance as they leave school.

- As young people move through S4-S6, based on complementary tariff scores, school performance remains consistently in line with the VC. There are declines in most measures in the latest few years.

Breadth and depth

- At S4, most young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 5C and a majority achieve three or more to five or more awards. Performance at SCQF level 5A has improved in 2023/24 for two to six or more awards. Both SCQF level 5C and 5A are broadly in line with the VC.
- By S5, the school is in line with the VC for SCQF level 6C or better for one or more to three or more awards between 2021/22 and 2023/24. This had previously been significantly lower than the VC. Performance at SCQF level 6A or better is broadly in line with the VC. Senior leaders have identified the need to improve attainment at SCQF level 6 for three and five or more awards given declines in recent years.
- By S6, the school continues to perform in line with the VC. Attainment at SCQF level 6C or better and level 6A or better shows a decline in almost all measures in the last few years from 2021/22 to 2023/24. Performance at SCQF level 7C or better and level 7A are broadly in line with the VC.
- Senior leaders and staff have diversified the curriculum to provide a wider range of pathways for young people. This includes high uptake in foundation apprenticeships, National Progression Awards (NPA's) and skills for work courses. A significant number of young people in S5/6 2023/24 achieved SCQF awards at level 6 in 2023/24.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- All young people in S1-S3 benefit from wider achievement pathways through the BGE skills based initiatives. The S1 and S2 Explorers and Adventurers programmes provide a platform for young people to impact their school and local communities through the social media awareness activities and engagement with local charities. Learners in S3 Voyagers programme work closely with employers to recognise their skills and apply them through industry based challenges. The school should continue to work with partners and young people to ensure the skills programme is as impactful, motivating and relevant as it can be.
- Most young people in the senior phase apply the skills they have developed to impact change within their school and local community through a number of volunteering roles. Young people are able to articulate their skills progression and identify the core benefits of their volunteering activities, with the support of the School Leavers Profile.
- The majority of young people at Mackie Academy participate widely in leadership roles from S1 to S6. Examples include Mental Health Ambassadors, P7 Transition helpers and Active Schools Volunteers. Young people talk confidently about the skills they have gained such as responsibility, independence and team work. Opportunities for further accreditation should be pursued.
- Mackie Academy has a well-supported wider achievement programme. This is enabling young people to demonstrate successes in a wide range of skills and knowledge gained. Engagement is high, particularly in S1 and S2 with over 70% of young people engaging in activities. Participation is tracked, which allows senior leaders to target young people who are missing out. Young people have achieved success at national competitions in engineering, cooking and netball through their work in the extra curricular activities.

Equity for all learners

- Most young people stay in SIMD eight, nine and ten based on Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). No young person lives in the most deprived areas of Scotland. As a result, senior leaders have developed approaches to identify young people who face other potential barriers to learning. This includes young people with low attendance, care experienced learners and young people with Free School Meal Entitlement (FME). Through in-house tracking systems and a range of targeted interventions, there are signs of improved attendance and engagement for a few young people in these groups.
- Senior leaders have used Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) in a variety of ways. For session 2024/25 PEF is directed to improve the attainment of a few young people in S3 and S4 who have FME. PEF staff have a clear focus on ensuring these young people achieve literacy and numeracy awards at SCQF level 4 or better and are supported into a positive post school destination. There are signs of improving outcomes for these young people, although this work is still at an early stage. Senior leaders should continue to review the impact of PEF to ensure it is accelerating the progress of the young people targeted.
- Senior leaders are aware of the need to monitor the uptake of girls into Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related curricular areas and activities. The school has worked in partnership with a local university to explore the reasons behind under representation. Staff have piloted an approach to improve the uptake of girls in one STEM subject area. This work has had a positive impact, and the school is now planning to extend this into other STEM curricular areas.
- Attendance figures for the school have been above the national average for the last five years. Staff have introduced recently more effective and systematic methods of recording, tracking and monitoring young people's attendance across the school day. Staff work with a variety of partner groups to support the engagement and attendance of a few identified young people. This is leading to improved attainment and achievement for these learners.
- When compared using average complimentary tariff scores, the attainment of young people who left school in 2022/23 and who live in SIMD decile six is below that of young people who reside in similar deciles nationally. It is inline or above the national measure in all other deciles.
- Strong work between school staff and partners such as Skills Development Scotland (SDS), local employers, colleges and universities is supporting almost all young people to move to a positive destination on leaving school. This has been in line with the VC since 2018/19 and is significantly higher than the VC in 2022/23.

Other relevant evidence

- Staff have taken positive steps to minimise the cost of the school day to ensure young people can engage fully in the curriculum and wider life of the school. This includes providing support for school trips, uniform and a digital device for all S1 learners with FME. All learners can access a breakfast club which is supporting a few young people to be ready to learn. As planned, pupil 'US time' representatives should now take a lead role in determining the school's approach to equity for all learners.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.