

Summarised inspection findings

Airdrie Academy

North Lanarkshire Council

29 April 2025

Key contextual information

School Name: Airdrie Academy
Council: North Lanarkshire Council
SEED number: 850548
Roll: 1014

Airdrie Academy was founded in 1849 and recently celebrated their 175th anniversary. The school is situated in the town of Airdrie. There are eight associated primary schools. In September 2023, 42.7% of pupils lived in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In September 2023, 21.5% of pupils were registered for free school meals. In September 2023, the school recorded 22.2% of young people as having an additional support need. However, the school report this figure as inaccurate citing 36.4% of young people requiring additional support with their learning.

The headteacher has been in post for eight years. He is supported by four substantive depute headteachers. There is also a temporary pupil equity fund (PEF) appointed depute at 0.6 full time equivalent.

Attendance was generally below the national average in 2022/23. Attendance has improved in 2023/24 and is now closer to the national average. Exclusions are generally in line with the national average.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher is well-respected across the school and local community. In session 2018/19, the headteacher worked extensively with a range of stakeholders to develop the school's current values of determination, ambition, respect and teamwork. Most staff and young people demonstrate the school's values in lessons and around the school. Staff have developed formal annual awards for young people in S1-3, linked to how well they demonstrate the values. Teachers report that the enthusiasm this is generating amongst young people to be the best version of themselves, is helping to improve attendance and engagement in learning. The values are supported by a clear vision for young people of 'learning today, leading tomorrow'. This is promoted well along with the values through the daily routines, assemblies and the house structure to promote positive school ethos. Moving forward, all staff should continue to work with young people to integrate the values fully in young people's and staff's everyday interactions.
- Senior leaders have developed a school improvement plan that reflects local and national priorities. They consulted with a range of stakeholders including young people and parents as part of the development of the improvement priorities. Key areas identified for ongoing improvement are health and wellbeing, learning and teaching, curriculum and attainment. To ensure the full benefits of improvements in these areas are realised, senior leaders need to continue to improve approaches to their strategic leadership of change. For example, there is a need for clearer leadership lines of responsibility to improve the school's curriculum arrangements, adherence to statutory duties and approaches to inclusion.
- Staff have clear plans in place for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). These prioritise literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing along with digital skills and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW). Regular PEF updates demonstrate the impact this work is having on improving outcomes for young people. Staff should now consider how they can more effectively involve stakeholders in the planning of PEF priorities.
- Senior leadership roles and responsibilities are continuing to evolve. The headteacher should continue as planned to shape and finalise senior leadership remits and responsibilities so that there is greater clarity of who is leading improvement priorities. This will help to progress areas of the school's key improvement priorities at an improved pace.
- All departments and faculties engage in regular self-evaluation. Staff are working in groups to look outwards to identify highly effective practice nationally to help inform aspects of school improvement and self-evaluation. The quality and accuracy of self-evaluation across the school is variable. Senior leaders should continue to capitalise on the stronger practice that exists and share this across the school. This will help to improve the quality of self-evaluation across all faculties. Senior leaders need to work more closely with faculties and departments to improve

the quality of improvement planning. This will help middle leaders and teachers to understand better the importance of the role they play in self-evaluation leading to self-improvement. This will also help senior leaders and teachers to monitor success and progress over time in the priority areas requiring continued improvement across the school.

- Almost all faculty and department improvement plans reflect the school's improvement priorities. Senior leaders need to provide increased rigour to support consistently robust quality within all the improvement plans. Currently, too few faculty plans contain strategic, measurable targets set out using clear, evaluative language to highlight improvement journeys. Senior leaders should review faculty plans, capitalising on the local authority professional learning support available to ensure that all plans have a strategic focus, credible 'evaluation checkpoint' statements, and measurable targets.
- The majority of middle leaders contribute well to leading aspects of the school's improvement work. They, along with teachers, are leading the school's work around improving monitoring, learning and teaching and promoting young people's skills development through wider achievements. This work is not yet completed and so its impact on outcomes for learners is not yet clear. There is clear potential across middle leadership to develop further the school's strategic approaches. This includes in areas such as, improving teachers' career development opportunities building on the strong work in informal career development shadowing opportunities, quality assurance, self-evaluation and strengthening all staff's confidence in applying national standards and expectations. Much of this work is already under way. Senior and middle leaders and staff need now to continue to look outwards more regularly, identifying highly effective practice to progress and formalise much of the above-mentioned development work. This will help to ensure greater rigour and more robust monitoring of aspects of the work already started by middle leaders.
- Middle and senior leaders conduct planned annual professional review and development meetings with clear criteria for professional discussion and reflection. Staff would benefit from actions and next steps for improvement being more clearly focused on key areas of the school's improvement work. Support staff engage well in professional learning. This helps them to understand better how to support teachers and meet better the needs of young people. There are aspects of the school's work where more focused, universal professional learning would be beneficial for all staff to drive forward important areas for improvement at an improved pace. Overall, all staff need to identify and capitalise on more frequent universal professional learning that helps to develop their confidence in applying national standards and expectations.
- Middle leaders and teachers lead a wide range of relevant whole-school professional improvement groups. These are aimed at improving strategic areas of school improvement, as well as promoting aspects of the wider life of the school. For example, the work that the nurture and attendance group is carrying out is beginning to show early signs of positive impact around attendance and approaches to nurture to engage young people. The pupil achievements working group has developed updated approaches to celebrating achievement. This now goes beyond young people's academic achievements to celebrate aspects of young people's endeavour that reflect the school's values.
- Staff are involved in 14 improvement groups across the school. A minority of these are at the early stages of demonstrating a clear impact in the school's improvement agenda. Aspects of work that middle leaders and teachers are leading around areas of whole-school improvement are beginning to impact positively on change and improvement. For example, the learning and teaching working group's development of a '10-point plan' guide for teachers, which sets out

the 10 key features of an effective lesson, is beginning to generate positive signs of consistency across almost all subject areas.

- There is a wide range of planned areas for young people to lead across the school such as transition ambassadors that is impacting positively on children's confidence as they move into S1. Young people also report that staff encourage them well to lead areas for improvement across the school. For example, the 'Pride not Prejudice' lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer and other identities (LGBTQ+) group has recently been re-established by a group of young people. The school has achieved gold charter status for this area of the school's work. Young people leading this group are clear about what they need to do next to retain this status. They have also created learning inserts that they deliver to personal and social education (PSE) classes at all levels across the school to develop the profile of this work. Young people represent learners' views as class representatives and on the Pupil Parliament. They feel listened to but are unclear about what difference they are making. Young people are committed to supporting others through a range of leadership roles such as organising school events and providing transition support. Senior leaders should now consider how they can better enable young people to move from being consulted to being partners in school improvement.
- Partners are valued and trusted by school leaders to contribute effectively to supporting young people and develop the school curriculum. Cluster meetings help staff to work well with other services. This includes supporting family learning, to help children, young people and their families. These meetings also allow for joint planning for the evaluation of transition programmes.
- School leaders have a vision for developing the curriculum in line with DYW priorities. They are developing a strategic approach to embed these priorities. The school improvement plan (SIP) and departmental improvement plans include reference to the DYW agenda. However, staff understanding of wider skills development across subject areas is at an early stage. This results in an inconsistent approach to ensuring all young people are supported sufficiently to make informed choices about their career aspirations.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- There are positive and mutually respectful relationships between staff and young people in almost all classes. Staff ensure a consistent approach to achieving a positive and caring ethos in classrooms to support and nurture young people. The majority of young people are eager to learn, have a positive attitude towards their learning and are confident to seek help as required. A few young people are not fully engaged with their learning and at times display low-level behaviours; however, this is not having a significant impact on learning and teaching.
- Airdrie Academy's 10-point plan for effective learning and teaching was developed by the learning and teaching working group. Staff in this group consulted young people and colleagues as part of the development phase. This is displayed in all classrooms and provides a helpful and consistent framework for all staff to plan learning. Teachers are beginning to embed this approach and aspects of this 10-point plan can be seen in almost all lessons. Senior leaders should ensure that through robust quality assurance effective practice is identified across all aspects of learning and teaching. This should be shared with all staff through appropriate professional learning opportunities to achieve consistently high-quality learning and teaching.
- Almost all young people are focused and participate well during lessons. However, young people complete the same learning activities frequently and experience learning that is not appropriately matched to their learning needs. As a result, not all young people experience appropriate challenge in their learning. The majority of lessons are overly teacher-led and delivered at the same pace for all learners. This results in young people being passive in their learning. Teachers should plan activities that allow young people to be actively engaged in their learning at an appropriate level of support and challenge. In a few subject areas young people have opportunities to personalise their learning and lead aspects of their learning well.
- Almost all teachers help young people identify ways that they can be successful in their learning. In a majority of lessons teachers use questioning to check for understanding and recall of information. A few teachers use skilled questioning to support young people to think more deeply about their learning and develop higher-order thinking skills. Teachers should develop their questioning strategies further to ensure skilled questioning is being used in all lessons to develop young people's higher-order thinking skills.
- In a majority of lessons teachers use starter activities. These support young people to link current learning and build on what young people already know. However, teachers should consider the time allocated to these tasks and their purpose. In almost all lessons success criteria are too focused on the completion of tasks rather than on how young people can demonstrate progress in their learning. The majority of lessons include a plenary. A few of

these plenaries allow teachers and young people to assess their learning against the success criteria and allow for planning next steps in learning.

- Young people have access to online learning platforms. These provide young people with access to a range of appropriate resources to support them in their learning. In a few lessons teachers make creative use of digital technologies to assess young people's learning. This information is used to make adaptations to the lesson to better meet the needs of the young people. Senior and middle leaders should ensure that this practice is more widely shared with staff.
- Almost all teachers use a range of appropriate summative assessments to support their judgements of learners' progress across the broad general education (BGE) and senior phase. A few teachers make effective use of formative assessment strategies to track young people's progress during lessons. The progress of young people in the BGE is tracked by faculty leaders. There is not an agreed approach across faculties to tracking BGE attainment.
- All teachers have access to faculty course plans that support their planning for each year group. These plans often reflect planning for whole topics or a full term. The quality of these plans is variable and link mostly to summative assessments rather than plan for progression in learning. In a few faculties staff make appropriate use of assessment data to plan for next steps in learning. However, most teachers are not utilising assessment information effectively to inform and adapt lesson plans. The needs of all learners are not being met as a result.
- Almost all teachers engage in verification of attainment and achievement in the senior phase with faculty colleagues. This approach has increased teacher confidence in assessment judgements. A few teachers have engaged in moderation activities with colleagues in other schools. This work is focused mostly on senior phase courses. There is scope for staff to work with colleagues in cluster schools on moderation of BGE courses. Most teachers have engaged with external assessment support materials created by the Scottish Qualification Authority. This is supporting teachers to make more reliable assessment judgements. These activities should now be extended across all curricular areas.
- Staff use assessment data systematically in the senior phase to set aspirational targets and track learners' progress. Young people in all year groups value learner conversations with their teachers. These discussions often follow on from summative assessments. The quality and consistency of these discussions is of a higher standard in the senior phase. Young people have a clear understanding their progress and their next steps in learning when these conversations are of a high quality. Staff should now ensure greater consistency in the quality, use and impact of learner conversations.
- Almost all subject departments have individual approaches to tracking and monitoring young people's progress. This is especially evident in the BGE. These systems are variable in quality and are used inconsistently to inform the planning of learning. A few faculties use tracking information well to support young people's learning in class.
- There is more coherence in the tracking of attainment in the senior phase. Senior and middle leaders should work collaboratively to develop further a coherent approach to tracking and monitoring. This will support all teachers to ensure that high-quality assessment informs interventions leading to improved attainment.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Almost all young people are supported by an effective transition programme as they move from primary to secondary school. The programme includes enhanced transition opportunities to support identified young people. Staff are at the early stages of providing informal taster sessions, moderation and understanding standards events in partnership with the primary school staff. Young people would benefit from a more strategic approach to planning curricular transitions to ensure continuity and progression in learning.
- The senior leadership team and staff are reviewing the curricular offer annually to ensure that it meets the needs of learners and provides progression pathways. They should now provide the opportunity to consider the curriculum rationale at whole-school and faculty level. Young people are supported to make subject choices at the end of S1 in two curricular areas. This means that not all young people receive their full entitlement to learn across all the experiences and outcomes up to the third level.
- Young people make choices towards the end of S2 by selecting five subjects as well as the required core subjects. In the senior phase, almost all young people choose to follow seven courses in S4.
- In the senior phase a wide range of qualifications are on offer from National 3 to Advanced Higher. Vocational programmes at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 4 and 5 provide pathways for young people in the senior phase, covering areas such as furniture making, travel and tourism, health sector and Scottish Football Association (SFA) refereeing at SCQF level 7. All departments are considering how further qualifications and accreditation can enhance the senior phase curriculum to improve young people's outcomes.
- Young people receive two periods a week of French within the BGE. They have the opportunity to choose a second language in S2 as an elective. However, this is not in line with national guidance. Staff should now begin to develop modern languages in line with 1 + 2 expectations, which require that a second language is offered universally.
- Young people receive their entitlement to at least two 50-minute periods of high-quality physical education (PE) for all young people S1 to S4. Young people also receive their entitlement to religious and moral education (RME) in S1 to S4. Senior leaders should ensure that all young people in S5 and S6 receive their full entitlement to progressive and meaningful learning in RME.
- Literacy and numeracy as a responsibility of all has been a focus of staff in the past. However, literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are not yet clearly mapped or developed across the school as a responsibility of all. Senior leaders should develop and implement a strategic approach to ensure that these entitlements are embedded across the curriculum. Young people would benefit from working with staff to make best use of the library to support improvements in literacy.
- School leaders have a vision for developing the curriculum in line with Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) priorities. Teaching staff have been focusing on meta skills development to promote skills for learning, life and work to young people. The DYW coordinator is supporting the development and delivery of the skills framework across the curriculum. Staff have identified correctly the need to develop a strategic approach to embed these priorities.

- The DYW Coordinator is using Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) to support school leaders in developing curriculum programmes in areas such as health, food production and construction. A strategic approach would further development of curriculum design to ensure that teachers are utilising LMI to plan the curriculum for their subjects.
- Foundation Apprenticeships and National Progression Awards are offered by the school and there are opportunities for staff and young people to engage with local colleges and employers. This promotes the awareness of potential careers and range of vocational pathways to all young people. Young people have the opportunity to develop entrepreneurial skills through the provision of a barista service for the school community.
- Young people feel well supported by the close collaboration between Pupil Support, DYW and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) staff. All young people meet with the careers advisor to discuss their progression pathways. All young people benefit from advice and support on career options and related skills development to support them towards a positive destination. There are targeted interventions for young people at risk of entering a negative destination. This ensures that almost all young people are entering a positive destination.
- A wide range of stakeholders support young people with career, further education and higher education information through career events, guest speaker and industry events. Partnership arrangements between employers and school senior leaders support young people with mock interviews and CV writing workshops to develop skills for life, learning and work.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Most parents are satisfied with the school and agree that their child is making appropriate progress. Most parents are comfortable contacting staff with suggestions or issues. A few parents highlight difficulty in receiving a timely or satisfactory response from staff when raising concerns.
- Senior leaders communicate effectively with parents about whole-school matters. Parents value the regular newsletter which celebrates young people's success as well as providing helpful information about school events. A minority of parents would welcome greater opportunities to understand how their views about school improvement are taken into account. The majority of parents agree that they receive regular feedback about their child's progress. A minority of parents feel that reports could be more helpful in informing them about their child's progress in learning.
- The majority of parents feel encouraged to be involved in the Parent Council (PC) and are kept well informed about their work. The PC works well with senior leaders and is consulted regularly about school improvement. Senior leaders are well placed to involve the PC parents more fully in identifying improvement priorities and evaluating progress. Members of the PC support school events and undertake carefully considered fundraising activities to enhance young people's experiences. Senior leaders are currently focusing on increasing parental engagement with the PC.
- A few parents expressed concern about the school's response to incidents involving bullying or violence between young people.

2.1 Safeguarding

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

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Staff and young people have worked together well to develop a strong sense of community across the school. Staff know young people as individuals, and young people value the support they receive from their teachers. As a result, positive and caring relationships are evident and most young people have a strong sense of belonging and pride in their school.
- Staff promote the school value of respect well and most young people feel that staff treat them fairly and with respect. A majority feel that their peers treat them with respect. Most young people feel safe in school as a result of the respectful relationships, and a range of other supports such as safe spaces and the breakfast club. A few young people engage in disruptive behaviour in corridors and classrooms which is negatively impacting other members of the school community. Senior leaders should now continue with plans to review and update the 'positive relationships policy' so that all young people can experience a positive and calm environment for learning.
- Staff have a clear focus on embedding nurturing approaches. Senior leaders and partners have provided professional learning for all staff on the principles of nurture. This equips staff better to understand the challenges young people are facing and offer appropriate support. As a result, most young people feel nurtured, included and cared for. Staff provide a range of targeted nurturing interventions which help a few young people engage in their learning. Most young people are clear about who they would speak to if they were upset or worried about something and most are confident approaching staff with their concerns. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to embed further nurturing approaches, applying these consistently across the whole school. This should include reviewing the accessibility of period products to ensure young people's dignity.
- Most young people feel staff encourage them to be healthy and active. Most young people benefit from regular exercise, both in physical education classes and through a range of out of class activities available through 'Future Fridays'. This is supporting the emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing of young people well.
- Staff have responded appropriately to the increase in mental health concerns with well-considered interventions with partners. Most young people are aware of the range of mental health supports they can access, if required. These supports have helped the majority of young people involved to reduce their anxiety. A few senior phase young people are trained mental health ambassadors. They support younger peers well during personal and social education (PSE) by focusing on strategies to promote positive mental health. These young people work to try to reduce any stigma associated with mental health. This focus on mental health is helping a few young people to recognise more clearly behaviours which impact on their mental wellbeing. Senior phase pupils also lead aspects of the development of rights and

equalities. This has increased their confidence in working with others and has improved their leadership skills.

- The PSE programme develops aspects of young people's mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. It is informed by local issues, covering topics such as substance misuse, keeping safe online and career education. Principal Teachers of Pupil Support deliver PSE to their caseload in S1 to S3, helping these young people to develop strong relationships with a key adult. Young people would appreciate the opportunity to shape the content of the PSE programme so it reflects more meaningfully issues important to them. Currently, young people in S5 and S6 do not have enough regular, planned opportunities to consider and discuss topics relevant to their stage in life such as budgeting, aspects of equality and diversity, and managing risks. Pastoral teachers, together with young people and partners, should continue to review the PSE programme, to ensure relevance and progression in learning from S1 to S6.
- A majority of staff and young people have a shared understanding of the wellbeing indicators. Young people reflect on their wellbeing by completing regular questionnaires and wellbeing webs during PSE. Principal Teachers of Pupil Support use information gathered from these reflections to identify individual young people requiring additional support with their wellbeing. They are now well placed to use this data more strategically to plan and inform interventions that address common wellbeing concerns across groups of learners. Staff should now develop approaches to wellbeing across the curriculum. This would strengthen young people's understanding of the relationship between their wellbeing and achieving success.
- Senior leaders should develop a comprehensive, strategic overview of all aspects of pupil support with a particular focus on ensuring robust procedures around statutory duties. This should be developed with stakeholders to ensure that there are clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Teachers need to be able to identify and record more accurately all those who have barriers to learning. There are a few young people at present whose needs are not being met. Support plans must contain appropriately specific and measurable learning targets to ensure young people are receiving the right level of support and challenge to be able to achieve positive outcomes. Senior leaders should also have more robust processes in place to monitor and review the impact of any interventions.
- Pupil support staff provide teachers with information relating to young people's additional support needs. This includes email updates, pen portraits and getting it right for me (GIRFME) plans containing young people's learning needs. However, this information is not sufficiently detailed, current or specific. Senior leaders should continue with plans to streamline information on learners' needs into one easy to access database. This will support better teachers' planning to meet the needs of all young people in their classes.
- Care experienced young people are supported well, particularly by the pupil support team who track and monitor their attendance, attainment and destinations. There are enhanced transition arrangements from P7 to help care experienced young people feel safe and included. Care experienced young people are appropriately considered for a coordinated support plan to ensure that their needs are met by school staff, working with partners where appropriate.
- Attendance data indicates an improving trend towards the national average. Staff's recent targeted approaches to maximising attendance are beginning to improve the attendance of a few individual learners. These approaches include alternative learning experiences through external and local partnership working. Senior leaders should now work with all stakeholders to develop an overarching attendance strategy that has a clear focus on maximising attendance for all young people. This should include clear and robust procedures for monitoring and

tracking all learners' attendance. This work can be supported well by applying local and national guidance fully around the accurate recording of attendance, alongside appropriate and timeous communication with parents and carers.

- The number of young people being excluded from school is reducing, demonstrating staff's commitment to inclusion. Alternative supports are available for young people at risk of exclusion. This includes offering them time to reflect through 'Reset Days' or one-to-one and group work in nurture or in The Hub. A few young people are supported well through the use of bespoke and part-time timetables. Senior leaders should ensure that national guidance around the use of part-time timetables is followed closely. For example, regular assessment, planning and review should be in place to support learners back to a full-time experience where possible. Planned short term tracking and review will support minimising the time learners spend on part-time timetables.
- A few young people do not feel that the school deals well with bullying. Most young people who have experienced bullying appreciate the support they receive from pupil support staff. A few young people who have experienced bullying report that instances continue beyond staff intervention. Senior leaders and pupil support staff should develop a clear overview of instances of bullying, racism or discriminatory incidents. This will support staff to analyse trends and patterns and evaluate the impact of actions taken. Senior leaders should now, as planned, work with young people, staff and parents to create a whole-school approach to anti-bullying and respect for all.
- The school has achieved gold in the LGBT Charter Award and is also accredited for its work in rights-based learning. The 'Pride not Prejudice' pupil group is raising awareness of diversity and the importance of tackling discrimination through assemblies, calendar events and inserts into PSE. The Rights Respecting School pupil group meet regularly to discuss and progress the school's approach to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Young people would benefit from learning in more depth, across the curriculum, about the importance of respecting protected characteristics. This can ensure the school's culture is inclusive for all. Senior leaders should continue to develop staff awareness of equalities education more widely across the curriculum through ongoing staff professional learning.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole-school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. Areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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

- In September 2023, the school recorded 22.2% of young people as having an additional support need. However, senior leaders indicate that this figure is incorrect and under-reports the percentage of young people who require additional support. Senior leaders reported a more accurate percentage as 36.4% of young people requiring additional support with their learning.
- Senior leaders need to develop a clear strategic plan for raising attainment. Current approaches have important weaknesses that are impacting on young people's outcomes. This is particularly evident for young people who require additional support with their learning, reside in areas of deprivation or who are entitled to free school meals.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

BGE

- In 2021/22 to 2023/24, by the end of S3, most young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level or better in literacy and numeracy. In 2023/2024, by the end of S3, few young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy. A minority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy. Performance levels in literacy and numeracy show no consistent pattern of improvement.
- In both the English and mathematics departments further work is required to improve the quality of professional judgements. In literacy, staff need to develop a clearer understanding of national standards at CfE fourth level. Judgements at this level are not reliable. In mathematics, staff need to improve their use of national Benchmarks to evidence achievement of a level rather than National Qualification (NQ) standards.
- Staff with responsibility for literacy have reviewed and amended courses to meet the needs and interests of learners better. For example, they have audited class texts to ensure these reflect the interests of young people. This is supporting young people to be more engaged with the study of literature.
- Staff have developed strategies to increase young people's attainment in numeracy. These include the use of digital tools, a specific numeracy period and targeted support from additional staff.

Senior phase

Literacy

- Attainment in literacy for young people who left school has decreased from 2020/21 to 2022/23. Between 2018/19 to 2021/22 almost all young people who left school achieved SCQF level 4 or better which is generally in line with the virtual comparator (VC). Most achieved SCQF level 4 or better in 2022/23, significantly lower than the VC. In 2020/21 and 2021/22, most young people who left school achieved SCQF level 5 or better, in line with the VC. In 2022/23, the majority of young people who left school achieved SCQF level 5 or better which is significantly much lower than the VC. A minority of young people who left school achieved SCQF level 6 in 2022/23. This is a decrease on previous years where most young people who left school achieved this level. Attainment at SCQF level 6 is in line with the VC. The percentage of young people with a recorded additional support need who left school between 2018/19 and 2022/23 is generally below the VC for SCQF level 3 or better, level 4 or better and level 5 or better.

Numeracy

- Attainment for young people leaving school between 2018/19 and 2022/23 is broadly in line with the VC for SCQF level 3 or better and level 4 or better. At SCQF level 5 or better the percentage of young people who achieved this level has decreased and is significantly much lower than the VC for 2022/23. A majority of young people who left school between 2019/20 to 2022/23 attained numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better, in line with the VC. In 2022/23, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better. A minority of young people who left school between 2019/20 to 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 6 or better. This was significantly higher than the VC in 2021/22 and in line with the VC for 2022/23. In numeracy, the percentage of young people who left school achieving SCQF level 3 or better to SCQF level 6 who have a recorded additional support need has generally decreased between 2020/21 and 2022/23 and is generally below that of the VC.

Cohorts

Literacy

- At S4, the majority of young people achieve SCQF level 5 or better in literacy between 2019/20 to 2023/24 which is generally in line with the VC. By S5 based on the S5 roll, in 2022/23 the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy, significantly much lower than the VC. This improved in 2023/24 with most young people achieving SCQF level 5 or better. This is now significantly lower than the VC. A majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy between 2019/2020 and 2023/24, in line with the VC. By S6 based on the S6 roll, most young people achieve SCQF level 6 in literacy, in line with the VC.

Numeracy

- At S4, a majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in 2023/24. This increased from a minority of young people achieving at this level between 2021/22 to 2022/23 and is now in line with the VC having been previously significantly much lower. By S5 based on the S5 roll, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in 2022/23, a decrease on previous years and significantly much lower than the VC. Attainment at this level improves in 2023/24, with the majority of young people achieving SCQF level 5 or better. This is now significantly lower than the VC. A minority of young people achieve numeracy at SCQF level 6. Attainment at this level has decreased and is now in line with the VC for 2022/23 and 2023/24, having been significantly higher than the VC in 2020/21 and 2021/22. By S6 based on the S6 roll, the percentage of young people achieving SCQF level 5 or better has decreased to be significantly lower than the VC. In 2023/24, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6, in line with the VC. This had previously been a majority of young people and significantly much higher than the VC in 2021/22 and significantly higher in 2022/23.

- A minority of young people are presented at both SCQF level 4 and level 5 in S4 for mathematics awards. Staff are working towards reducing the number of dual presentations this session. The percentage of young people who achieve a grade A to C in National 5 mathematics and application of mathematics is below the national average in 2023/24 for those young people in S4 to S6 presented for the qualifications. Young people are presented for N5 mathematics or applications of mathematics or both. Staff highlight how their positive approach to presentation and coursing has led to an increase in mathematics achievement at SCQF level 5.
- A few young people do not attain qualifications in literacy or numeracy before they leave school. Staff have implemented a number of strategies including engaging with young people away from school or through digital technology to improve this. As a result, fewer young people are leaving with no literacy or numeracy qualifications.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders are clear that young people's attendance is impacting negatively on attainment. Staff have successfully improved attendance from last session and are currently meeting the whole school attendance target. Staff engage well with parents and young people, through home visits and other out of school environments, to help them access learning. Staff are currently improving attendance for specific groups including young people in S2 and those entitled to free school meals. For this session to date, a minority of young people have an attendance rate of below 90%.

BGE

- Senior leaders provided data which showed a majority of young people achieve CfE third level by the end of S3 in most curricular areas. The majority of young people achieve CfE fourth level in a minority of curricular areas.
- Senior leaders now need to work with staff to improve approaches to moderation, including an improved understanding of national standards to improve the reliability of these professional judgements.
- Senior leaders have an overview of young people's progress. They recognise the need to develop a more strategic overview of young people's progress. They are at the early stages of developing a whole-school BGE tracker to replace individual faculty trackers. Staff should work together to put in place a more coordinated approach to support all young people to make appropriate progress in their learning. They should engage in further work to analyse the progress of groups of young people, including those entitled to free school meals.

Senior phase

Improving attainment for all Leavers

- The attainment of the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people is generally in line with the VC between 2018/19 and 2022/23 when using average complementary tariff points. The attainment of the lowest attaining 20% is generally below the VC and significantly much lower than the VC in the latest year 2022/23.
- When compared using average complementary tariff points, the attainment of young people with a recorded additional support need and who left school between 2020/21 to 2022/23 has decreased and is generally below the VC.

Cohorts

- When using average complementary tariff points at S4 and by S5 based on the S5 roll, the lowest attaining 20% of young people is significantly lower or much lower than the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24. By S6 based on the S6 roll, attainment is in line with the VC. Attainment of the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people is broadly in line with the VC for 2019/20 to 2023/24 at S4, by S5 based on the S5 roll and by S6 based on the S6 roll.

Breadth and depth

- Senior leaders are aware of the need to raise attainment. There are signs of attainment improving in S4 from 2021/22. However, attainment in S5 shows no clear pattern of improvement and in S6 is decreasing year on year. However, if young people stay on in school to S6, attainment is generally in line with the VC. Senior leaders should improve the strategic planning for raising attainment. They should ensure all staff have a clear understanding of the overarching school-wide approaches to raising attainment.
- At S4, most young people attained one or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better and a minority attained five or more awards at this level from 2019/20 to 2023/24, in line with the VC. The school shows a pattern of improvement for young people attaining four or more awards to seven or more awards at SCQF level 5 from 2021/22 to 2023/24. From 2021/22 to 2023/24, attainment at SCQF level 5A or better for three or more to six or more awards shows an improving pattern and is broadly in line with the VC.
- By S5 based on the S5 roll, most young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better in 2023/24, in line with the VC and an improvement on 2022/23. The majority of young people achieve five or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better, in line with the VC. Young people's attainment at SCQF level 5A or better is in line with VC for the previous five years. Young people's attainment at SCQF level 6C or better is broadly in line with the VC. The majority of young people achieve one or more awards at this level. A few young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better, in line with the VC. The percentage of young people achieving two or more to three or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better has decreased and is now significantly lower than the VC for 2023/24.
- By S6 based on the S6 roll, almost all young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better and SCQF level 5A or better. Young people's attainment at these levels is broadly in line with the VC for one or more to seven or more awards for 2019/20 to 2023/24. Young people's attainment at SCQF level 6C or better and 6A or better has decreased from 2021/22 to 2023/24. Most young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better. This is significantly lower than the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24. A minority of young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better, in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better between 2019/20 and 2023/24, in line with the VC.
- In S4, by S5 and by S6, a few young people gain awards beyond NQs and Skills for Work courses. Staff in recent years have developed a wider range of curriculum pathways. For example, they have recently introduced courses in furniture making, modern languages for life and work, mentoring and computer games development. A few young people also gain awards at SCQF level 7 though courses such as Scottish Football Association: Refereeing.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- The majority of young people are building friendships and demonstrating confidence through participating in achievement activities within and outwith school. Young people are supported

well to take part in school, regional and national competitions and events. Young people lead school wide events, like the annual talent show, Halloween events and a street food festival. These are popular and help develop a sense of school community. Young people who choose to participate in 'Future Fridays' programmes value highly the opportunity these provides to grow friendships and develop interests. They feel more confident and willing to try new activities through their participation and those in S1 are more settled.

- A minority of young people are undertaking volunteer, leadership or ambassador roles within the school, including almost all in S5 and 6. Programmes such as Mental Health, Sports and Language Ambassadors are enabling young people to contribute to others learning whilst gaining skills including communication and teamwork. A few young people in the senior phase lead opportunities for other young people to socialise and take part in activities. Others contribute to their community, such as undertaking litter picks through local uniformed organisations and running and coaching sports activities. Senior leaders and staff now need to explore with young people and partners, how they can develop these important skills further, especially for those in S1 to S4. This would enable every young person to develop their leadership skills and contribute to developing their school and community.
- School certificates, newsletters, awards ceremonies and social media are used well to celebrate progress and achievement. An increasing number of young people are gaining nationally recognised awards and qualifications. For example, in 2023/24, 15 young people achieved a Duke of Edinburgh's bronze award, six gained a SCQF level 7 Scottish Football Association professional development award in refereeing, 10 gained Saltire Awards through helping to run the family resource room and 14 completed a SCQF level 4 award in computer games development. Almost all of those who participated in the summer activities gained Outdoor Discovery Awards. School staff and their partners should continue to explore how they can enable more young people to gain relevant awards that will best recognise their learning, volunteering and skills. This should include supporting more young people to gain Saltire awards for their work supporting others.
- Senior staff are in the early stages of developing a system to track every young person's achievements. They should consider how this can be used to capture skills as well as participation. Gathering such information could support young people to more fully recognise their progression and identify what they want to achieve next. Whole-school achievement and skills tracking would also enable staff and partners to better understand which individuals and cohorts are not participating and support them accordingly.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a strong understanding of young people and their families' individual circumstances. Staff, parents and carers are consulted on the use of PEF. Key staff have focused on addressing specific attainment gaps in literacy and numeracy; engaging young people in their learning; removing barriers to learning such as cost of the school day; and improving attendance across the school.
- Additional staffing funded by PEF is supporting attendance and attainment for young people at risk of not achieving awards in literacy and numeracy. Identified staff, working collaboratively, have supported a few young people to improve their attendance and engage better with their learning. As a result, most young people who attend school and are supported through this work have improved their literacy or numeracy. These staff are coordinating a variety of interventions which are also impacting positively on the number of young people at risk of not achieving five qualifications and those at risk of not achieving a positive destination.

- When compared using average complementary tariff scores, the attainment of young people who left school between 2020/21 and 2022/23, and who live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles one and two, has decreased when compared to young people who reside in similar deciles nationally. Attainment at this level is now significantly lower than the VC. Senior leaders now need to analyse more fully the attainment and progress of young people through different characteristics such as entitlement to free school meals and additional support needs to raise attainment.
- Almost all young people moved on to a positive destination on leaving school between 2018/19 and 2022/23. The percentage of young people going to a positive destination is in line with the VC. The majority of young people go to further or higher education on leaving school. Staff have positive partnerships with several higher education providers to support widening access to university for young people. An increasing number of young people go to employment such as the hospitality, health and construction sectors. A minority of young people left school after completing S4. The percentage of young people staying on to S6 is lower than the national average. A minority of young people from the S4 cohort remain in the school for S6. A significant number of young people leave school both during and at the end of S6. Staff and partners work well to support them to a positive destination.
- Most young people who left school in 2022/23 and 2023/24 who reside in SIMD one and two entered a positive destination. Most young people with a recorded additional support need progressed to a positive destination on leaving school in this time period. Most young people in receipt of free school meals leave school to a positive destination.

Other relevant evidence

- Staff with responsibility for equity and PEF are employing a variety of approaches to mitigate the cost of the school day such as 'Magic Breakfast', free resources, a gift bank, Cash for Kids funding and uniform. The parents and carers have further developed the school's uniform initiative and are now leading the Airdrie Community School Bank, which resulted in them receiving the King's Award.

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.