29 September 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In August 2025, HM Inspectors published a letter on Forfar Academy. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Angus 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 should continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. This should include ensuring that tasks and activities are set at the right level of difficulty for all young people. Teachers should continue to develop further a shared understanding of high-quality teaching and learning.

This area for improvement is being addressed successfully.

Since the original inspection, staff and senior leaders have worked well together to strengthen how lessons are planned and delivered. As a result, there is now more consistency across most classes. Recent training for staff has focused on improving how teachers support different learners using questioning and feedback.

Staff in the school now have clearer approaches to reviewing their work. These are helping staff recognise what is working well and where further improvements are needed. The Learning and Teaching Action Group is helping to take this work forward and should continue to build on the strong practice already in place.

Relationships across the school are positive. Most young people learn in calm classrooms and feel encouraged to do their best. They take part well in most lessons and benefit from a range of activities, including group and independent work.

In most lessons, teachers explain clearly what young people are learning and begin lessons in ways that help them recall previous work. This supports understanding in most classes. There is scope for teachers to help young people reflect more on their learning at the end of lessons.

Planning of learning has improved, with a greater focus on supporting different learners. Most lessons include appropriate support, though some tasks could offer more consistent challenge for all. Teachers use questioning well to check understanding and should continue to develop this further to deepen learners' thinking.

© Crown Copyright

Project-based learning draws on strong links with partners to provide valuable real-life experiences. Young people enjoy these opportunities and recognise how they help them build important skills such as communication, creativity and teamwork.

Staff need to raise aspirations and attainment for young people. This should include more work to ensure professional judgements of achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels across all subjects are sound.

This area for improvement is being addressed successfully.

Crew, the daily pastoral and personal development provision for learners in S1 to S3, is strengthening the school's inclusive and supportive ethos. Daily meetings with their Crew leader provide young people with a safe and inclusive environment and regular, structured opportunities for relationship-building and self-reflection. Most staff, young people and parents value its impact on confidence, relationships and a sense of belonging. Student led conferences are also effective in helping young people share their progress and achievements. As a next step, senior leaders should continue to strengthen how they measure the impact of Crew to ensure it benefits all learners.

Teachers are making better use of assessment information to support learning. In S4 and above, most young people understand their progress and next steps. Discussions with teachers as well as pupil care and support staff are helping them improve. In S1-S3, learning conversations provide opportunities for young people to reflect on their learning and consider next steps. Increasing the consistency of these conversations will help all learners develop a clearer understanding of their learning and take greater ownership of their progress.

Changes to senior phase course choices are encouraging more ambitious pathways. Staff are using information more effectively to guide learners, helping them make better-informed decisions. This is beginning to raise aspirations further. Senior leaders should now ensure this robust coursing leads to improved attainment.

Staff have a stronger shared understanding of national standards through ongoing professional learning and moderation. This is improving consistency in assessing progress. Collaboration with staff from other schools is supporting this further. Senior leaders should continue to build on this work to strengthen reliability further across all areas.

Improved tracking systems are helping staff to identify where support is needed for individuals and groups. In the best practice, this is leading to adjustments in learning. Senior leaders should continue to support a consistent approach to using this information to improve outcomes for all young people.

© Crown Copyright

Staff should have a particular focus on improving the attainment of the middle and highest attaining groups of young people and those in S5 and S6. Staff should also work to improve outcomes in numeracy and in mathematics.

There have been positive improvements in this area. Senior leaders and staff have worked to develop and implement clear plans to raise attainment. Whilst it is too early to see the full and sustained impact of these changes, early improvements are evident.

Attainment in S5 and S6 improved overall in 2024/25 when compared with 2023/24. In particular, middle and higher attaining young people achieved outcomes more in line with expectations than previously. There were improvements in the percentage of young people achieving passes equivalent to National 5 and Higher in S5 and S6. However, school leaders have correctly identified improving attainment for the highest attaining 20% of learners in S4, and numeracy in S5, as next steps. It is also important that attainment improvements in S5 and S6 are maintained, and that the breadth of achievement, particularly in S6, is increased.

Across the school, staff have strengthened approaches to tracking and monitoring progress. Staff are using information more effectively to identify young people who need additional support. For example, targeted interventions such as small group work, nurture provision and personalised support for those with low attendance are beginning to improve engagement and progress in mathematics. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that this practice is consistent across all areas.

There is now a clearer link between progress through S1-S3 and attainment in the senior phase. Improvements in assessment and moderation, particularly in English and mathematics, are increasing confidence in teachers' judgements. This includes a more consistent approach to assessing literacy and numeracy levels and improved accuracy in identifying when young people are ready to progress.

Almost all young people move on to positive destinations beyond school. In 2024/25, the percentage of leavers moving on to a positive destination increased to its highest level since 2020/21.

Improving outcomes in numeracy and mathematics remains a priority for school leaders and teachers. Staff have worked well together to improve consistency in teaching, assessment and planning within the mathematics faculty. New options, such as National 5 Applications of Mathematics in S4, and more flexible pathways are helping to meet learners' needs. Increased and effective use of data by staff, as well as targeted support and interventions, are beginning to improve outcomes for young people. There are clear signs of progress in young people's numeracy attainment in S1-S3 and in the number of leavers gaining qualifications in numeracy. Senior and middle leaders should continue to develop relevant and challenging course pathways, the timing of assessments and the level of challenge in classes. This will help sustain this improvement.

© Crown Copyright

Senior leaders should now focus on embedding these approaches consistently and continuing to evaluate their impact to ensure all young people achieve improved attainment outcomes.

What happens next?

The school has made positive progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress on the area for improvement related to attainment within 12 months of the publication of this letter. This report will inform any decision made by HMIE 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 Angus Council, that we intend to take.

Michael Reid
HM Inspector

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.

© Crown Copyright