

# Summarised inspection findings

**St Margaret's Academy**

**West Lothian Council**

**19 May 2026**

## Key contextual information

School Name: St Margaret's Academy  
Council: West Lothian  
SEED number: 5512530  
Roll (Jan 2026): 1137

St Margaret's Academy is a six-year denominational school situated in the town of Livingston, West Lothian. The school has five associated primary schools, St John Ogilvie PS, St Ninians PS, St Pauls PS, Howden St Andrews PS and St Mary's PS.

The headteacher has been in post since August 2025 and is supported by three deputy headteachers, one of whom is in an acting capacity. There have been significant changes in leadership over the last four years.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average and have decreased over time.

In September 2024, 14.2 % of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2024, 15.2 % of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

The percentage of leavers in S4 and S5 is lower than 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-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 current school values of respect, equality, achieve, community and happiness (REACH), based on the Gospel values, were agreed a few years ago after full consultation with stakeholders. Young people learn about the values through assemblies, personal and social education (PSE) and in other curricular areas. They believe that these values are still relevant to them as they grow through the school. Young people reflect well the REACH values and are strong ambassadors for the school. They feel a strong sense of belonging to the school through their engagement with 'community'. This helps them demonstrate inclusivity to others as they recognise and celebrate all young people, staff and others who form the St Margaret's school community. Young people regularly reflect on their contribution to the REACH values through a variety of surveys and are recognised for upholding the values through specific REACH awards, presented at assemblies and departments, primarily in the senior phase.
- The well-respected headteacher demonstrates a very clear sense of direction for the school and is working well with stakeholders to take this forward. Supported well by his senior leaders, he has established strong working practices with principal teachers and staff. Senior leaders identified the need to improve collaboration across faculties. They introduced more regular and formal opportunities for faculty leaders to meet to discuss and plan improvements. This supports greater collaboration and is helping to develop stronger connections across the school. This approach is providing greater clarity and purpose to middle leaders' roles in improving outcomes for young people. There are early signs of greater consistency in experiences for both young people and staff. Staff appreciate this more collegiate approach and recognise the increasing transparency this brings.
- Senior leaders reviewed a range of remits across the school and introduced a few development posts to encourage more staff to lead specific aspects of improvement. Senior leaders should continue to review all remits across the school to ensure they are providing appropriate supports to enable all areas identified in the school improvement plan (SIP) to move forward more quickly.
- The current SIP is appropriately informed by national, local and school-level priorities. Senior leaders identify priorities using a range of data and professional dialogue at departmental and senior leadership levels, these are then shared with stakeholders. Middle leaders produce faculty improvement plans (FIPs) based on their own identified areas for development. In a few, well considered plans faculty priorities are linked well to whole-school priorities. Middle leaders are at the early stages of using a range of effective evaluative activities to measure the

impact of improvements. This includes teachers in each faculty considering how well they support young people to engage and learn. Currently, staff's understanding of how to measure progress across agreed priorities is inconsistent. As a result, it is not yet clear how planned priorities are to be measured. Senior leaders must ensure that planning outlines clearly the outcomes to be achieved and how progress towards these will be measured.

- Senior leaders have worked effectively with staff to help them understand better the need for high-quality self-evaluation activities in order to inform clear priorities for improvement through for example the 'SEAMS' (Self-evaluation at St Margaret's) initiative. This, along with an increasing awareness of using reliable and comprehensive data for a range of purposes is creating the conditions for improvement at all levels and in all areas of the school. Staff across the school are becoming more confident in using evaluative activities and language. The headteacher has developed a whole school calendar which brings together all the quality assurance activities which take place across the year. Currently, this is not specific enough to provide ongoing assurance that the activities designed to lead to improvements are actually delivering the desired effect. Staff need to consider further a range of activities at key points throughout the year to track, monitor and assess continually the impact of planned improvements.
- Teachers welcome the regular opportunities to be part of the recently created school improvement groups focusing on areas such as learning and teaching, use of data and wellbeing. Teachers enthusiastically share their professional knowledge and skills to make improvements to the learning experiences for young people. This, together with the opportunities for engaging in professional inquiry approaches, is enabling teachers to understand better the change management system, to consider specific aspects of their work and how to measure improvement. The work of the school improvement groups is at the early stages of showing impact. Staff should continue to develop their leadership within identified areas. In order to affect the greatest improvement for young people, senior leaders should ensure that all improvement activities are clearly linked to SIPs and FIPs. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to develop leadership at all levels of the school.
- Almost all teachers feel supported to engage in professional learning and that professional learning enables them to reflect on their practice. Almost all teachers believe that the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) standards are used to support professional dialogue. They appreciate the planned programme of career-long professional learning (CLPL) activities along with the additional inputs during in-service days and 'in-Fridays'. A few teachers are engaged in professional inquiry or Masters level study. This is leading to more teachers gaining a deeper understanding of pedagogy and how, for example, high-quality questioning, or collective, consistent routines support young people learn. As a result, a few teachers have taken on additional responsibilities regarding developing specific aspects of school improvement. For all professional learning activities to have the greatest impact on the experiences of young people, and to be sustainable, they need to be planned well through the school improvement planning processes.
- More than a third of teachers, across almost all faculties, act as appointees for the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). This is leading to improvements in the understanding and application of standards for National Qualifications in the senior phase.

- Young people in S6 have a wide and varied range of opportunities to develop and showcase their leadership skills. A few young people are selected, following a competitive process, to become school captains or ambassadors in specific areas of the school. Examples include, as mental health ambassadors, mentors in violence prevention (MVP), or supporting junior peers in different subjects. Young people in S6 appreciate the valuable experiences these activities give them to develop skills and competencies which they will need later in life. Across the school, young people represent their year groups at the pupil parliament. Led by young people, this whole school forum provides a formal mechanism by which young people make changes to their school and its environment. Recently, young people were instrumental in the decision to provide additional benches at the front of the school. Currently, however, all young people are not aware of the different pupil leadership opportunities at S6, nor are there enough opportunities for young people to develop their leadership skills across the different ages and stages. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to strengthen pupil voice at all levels and in all areas of the school.
- Most staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the wider school community. Senior leaders follow the local authority planning processes for their use of the pupil equity fund (PEF). This is shared with parents and includes an appropriate focus on reducing the cost of the school day, improving attendance and improving outcomes for care-experienced young people. Senior leaders review the PEF plan regularly to ensure appropriate progress is made against the agreed actions.
- Senior leaders are at the early stages of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) priorities across the school. Staff have developed a more coherent approach to work-based learning and are beginning to develop meta-skills across the school. Staff collaborate well with a wide range of partners to support young people and widen opportunities for learning. There remains a need to develop further DYW priorities across the school to ensure greater understanding of each person's roles and expectations. Senior leaders should also evaluate systematically the impact of partnership working.

## 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

- In almost all classes, positive relationships between teachers and young people are underpinned by the school's REACH values. This helps to contribute to a positive learning environment in which young people feel supported and confident to ask for help with their learning.
- Senior leaders have revised the 'St Margaret's Academy Consistent Routines' framework. Staff's approaches to developing positive relationships with young people combined with the early implementation of the framework, is beginning to support greater consistency of learning routines across the school. Almost all teachers use helpful starter activities to recap prior learning and create a purposeful climate for learning. In a majority of lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and give clear instructions. As a result, most young people complete planned activities successfully. The work of the 'Learning Lounge' is supporting well the early improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Learning in most classes is often overly teacher-led and delivered at the same pace for all learners. This limits opportunities for young people to develop sufficient depth in their learning and results in low level off task behaviour. As a next step, teachers should plan learning experiences that provide greater flexibility and allow young people to work at an appropriate pace and level of challenge. Senior leaders should continue to review and refine the framework to support ongoing improvement.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use questioning well to support young people to recall prior learning and check for understanding. In a minority of lessons, questioning is used more effectively to promote deeper thinking and extend learning. Ongoing work to strengthen CLPL opportunities means the school is well placed to take this forward. Staff should continue to build on stronger examples of questioning to ensure that all young people experience consistently high levels of challenge in their learning.
- Almost all teachers demonstrate an awareness of young people's additional support needs (ASN) through the comprehensive ASN information data base. A minority of teachers use this information well to adapt planned learning. As a result, not all young people are suitably supported or challenged in their learning. Teachers should use all resources related to additional support to more effectively plan, adapt and evaluate learning activities. This should ensure that all learners are appropriately supported and challenged. Senior and middle leaders should consider how best to monitor and evaluate the impact of this information on classroom practice. They should ensure all appropriate strategies and available resources are in place to support learners who require additional support.

- Teachers use the school's agreed digital platform effectively to share resources and support young people to retrieve and review their learning. For a minority of learners this is supporting independent learning. In addition, a minority of teachers are using a wider range of digital approaches in the classroom well, including the use of matrix barcodes and interactive assessment tools. This is enhancing young people's learning experiences. Young people are positive about how these approaches support them to better understand the progress they are making with their learning. Teachers should continue to develop the effective use of digital technologies to support learning across classes.
- In the broad general education (BGE) and senior phase, most teachers use summative assessment well to measure young people's progress across all stages. A minority of teachers use a range of effective formative assessments strategies well to better inform their planning of learning and teaching, however, this is variable across the school. All staff, supported by school leaders, should continue to develop a shared understanding of the aims and purpose of assessment to better support judgements about learners' progress and better inform their planning for next steps in learning.
- Staff are building confidence in applying national standards in relation to achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level as a result of appropriate moderation activities. However, these activities mainly focus on verification processes. Teachers now need to develop their understanding of the moderation cycle further to better support the planning of learning, teaching and assessment. The extended leadership team should ensure approaches to assessment in S3 are robust and consistent.
- Staff have designed senior phase assessments well to articulate with national course specifications. Staff have engaged in a range of professional learning, including formal roles with the SQA in almost all subjects, focusing on understanding standards of assessment processes. As a result, there is a strong understanding of assessment standards and requirements within certificated courses, which is supporting improvements in the attainment of young people.
- Most young people in the senior phase are supported very well to understand their progress through purposeful feedback from teachers. In the BGE young people's understanding of the progress they are making is variable, only a few young people can clearly articulate this. Teachers should extend the well-established approaches used in the senior phase to support improvement in the quality and consistency of feedback in the BGE.
- Departments use a variety of effective departmental tracking approaches to record, monitor and track young people's progress. This is supporting teachers and senior leaders well to identify young people who are not making sufficient progress and more effectively plan, as required. Senior leaders should develop a shared understanding of the expectations of class teachers and faculty heads following tracking periods. This will support a more consistent approach to how data is informing well planned interventions and improvements.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers provide a well-planned and considered universal curricular transition programme with both in-person and online inputs which support P7 children's transition from primary to secondary. In addition, an effective enhanced transition programme supports targeted groups of children. Teachers work collaboratively with primary colleagues on aspects of literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop the transition programme with associated primary staff to support improved progression in learning at the point of transition. This should aim to include joint moderation activities. This would support more effective planning for the transition to S1.
- Senior leaders have recently introduced a focus on meta-skills across S1 and S2 to support young people to reflect on their skill development. In addition to subject areas, S1 and S2 learners have the opportunity to identify and strengthen their skills through interdisciplinary learning (IDL). This session, S1 learners are also developing their digital skills through a digital literacy course. Senior leaders, as planned, should now work with young people, staff and partners to develop a skills framework that will help young people better understand the skills they are developing across all curricular areas, including through IDL.
- Young people in S1 and S2 receive their entitlement to experience the full range of experiences and outcomes across all curriculum areas. Most young people's learning is focused on CfE third level. Young people in S3 choose options from a range of curriculum areas. This results in some young people not experiencing their full entitlement in S3. Senior leaders should, as planned, ensure that the S3 curriculum aligns with national guidance and supports progression through the CfE levels for all young people.
- The majority of young people receive meaningful support and advice about their subject choices. This helps them to better understand the range of curricular pathways available to them. Option choice pathway materials, for all curricular areas, provide clear information on progression pathways for young people. Senior leaders organise information evenings which are well attended and support young people to make informed choices. A range of information and tracking data is used by senior leaders to advise young people on subject choice aligned to their chosen pathway.
- The senior phase curriculum is well planned with clear progression pathways and ensures an extensive offer for all young people. These include a wide range of national qualifications, awards in skills for learning, life and work, work-based training and training provider programmes. This includes the schools skills centre which delivers a range of SQA level qualifications, for example, in bike maintenance, horticulture and barista skills. This level of choice enhances engagement and supports young people to progress into destinations that reflects their interests, strengths and future ambitions. Where appropriate, curriculum planning reflects strongly labour market intelligence.
- School staff work effectively with West Lothian College to provide a range of qualifications in the senior phase across a broad range of subject areas. This is helping to meet learners needs and improve their experiences and outcomes. As a result of a recent revision of work placement processes all S4 pupils can access a high-quality work placement with personalised

options for S5 and S6. This has resulted in increased flexible pathways for young people and has led to employment opportunities for some young people.

- All BGE learners receive their full entitlement to language learning in line with national guidance. Young people receive two periods of well-planned and progressive learning in physical education from S1 to S4. All young people receive two periods of high-quality learning in religious education from S1 to S6. Additionally, young people in the senior phase are given the opportunity to participate in the 'Caritas award'. Those young people who take part in this award develop further a range of skills alongside acts of service within their community.
- The development of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as a responsibility of all is at an early stage of implementation across the school. In a few curricular areas, experiences and outcomes are included within course planning documents and used appropriately for planning. Senior leaders should develop and implement a strategic approach to ensure that these entitlements are fully embedded across the curriculum. As planned, senior leaders should work with teachers to continue to develop a shared understanding of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as a responsibility of all.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Teachers regularly report on the progress young people are making. The majority of parents value the helpful feedback they receive, including opportunities to discuss their child's learning at parent's evenings. A few parents would like more detailed information on the progress that their child is making, including further guidance on how they can use information within reports to support their child. Senior leaders should also consider how to create more opportunities for parents and young people to learn together. This would further strengthen parents' ability to support their child's learning at home and improve parental engagement.
- Most parents feel comfortable approaching staff with any questions or queries. However, a majority of parents do not feel that their views are taken into account when making changes. Senior leaders should consider how best they increase opportunities for parental consultation. This should include more frequent communication on the work of the school and any changes being made.
- Senior leaders are well supported by the Parent Council, who have raised funds to support young people's experiences. The Parent Council should now consider how they can improve communication with the wider parent body and encourage greater involvement in their work. Senior leaders keep the Parent Council well informed about school priorities and planned PEF spend. Senior leaders should consider how best parents could be involved in all aspects of school improvement planning and evaluation.

## 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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.
- Following the inspection the education authority, working with the school, have taken forward areas for improvement in safeguarding which required urgent action. HM Inspectors have reviewed information relating to these areas for improvement. HM Inspectors are satisfied with the response taken by the education authority and do not require any further information.

### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

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

- Most staff know young people very well and demonstrate a clear commitment to supporting their wellbeing. Young people have access to a range of staff from whom they can seek support and they are confident in the effectiveness of the support they will receive. As a result, most young people feel safe, well supported and respected at school.
- Most young people behave very well. A few young people can, at times, cause low level disruption in learning and in social areas. As planned, senior leaders should now build on work already undertaken on children's rights to review the relationships policy and approaches to dealing with bullying, with the whole school community. This should further strengthen consistent approaches to relationships and behaviour.
- Young people benefit from a relevant PSE programme from S1-S6. As a result, most young people are aware of what can impact their wellbeing and are developing their understanding of strategies to support their own wellbeing. Pupil support staff have worked with young people to review and evaluate the content of the programme in the BGE. They now need to ensure the content of the programme is responsive to all young people's needs, including in the senior phase.
- The effective pupil support team meets the wellbeing and learning needs of young people well. They use data very well to identify young people who would benefit from targeted support. Staff share and discuss helpful information about young people, including strategies to meet their needs. This ensures that young people receive appropriate support as issues emerge that helps them to engage in their learning. Senior and middle leaders should now consider how wellbeing data can be used even more effectively to gain a comprehensive picture of wellbeing across the school. This should support their understanding of the impact of universal and targeted support to inform strategic planning.
- Senior leaders and pupil support staff know young people very well. They effectively review the needs of young people who require support through a staged model of intervention. Their planning is rigorous with actions and progress reviewed regularly and adapted as required. They ensure that young people, parents and relevant partners contribute effectively to this process. Individual young people are supported well through a range of in-house interventions and by appropriate partners. This is leading to improved outcomes in attendance and attainment. Senior leaders should continue to work with pupil support staff to ensure all planning remains outcome focussed.

- Pupil support staff work well with a range of partners to support young people. This includes, for example, partners focused on work experience placements, careers, wellbeing and representatives from the local parish. The work with partners is leading to improvements in young people's attendance, confidence and self-esteem.
- A very well-planned pastoral transition programme supports young people as they move from primary to secondary. This includes detailed and bespoke planning with young people, families and partners for enhanced transition that supports well those who require additional support. Where appropriate, reviews are held to plan adjustments and further support. Information is updated on a regular basis by pupil support staff and senior leaders. This is helping almost all young people to settle well in S1.
- Through focussed professional learning, almost all staff are improving their understanding of how to fulfil their statutory duties in relation to Getting it Right for Every Child. Staff would appreciate and would benefit from further input regarding how to best support and meet the needs of all young people.
- Pupil support staff track rigorously the progress of individual young people who face challenges due to their circumstances. They offer a range of support, including with pathway planning. They ensure that all staff are appropriately aware of young people's circumstances and share helpful information that supports staff to be aware of strategies to meet the needs of individuals. This is supporting young people to make progress and achieve well. For example, young people accessing 'The Zone' resource for targeted intervention are supported well through bespoke planning to meet their needs. This is helping these young people to maintain or redevelop their engagement in learning and successfully access mainstream classes. All care experienced young people are considered for a coordinated support plan in line with local authority and national guidance.
- Appropriate staff work well with partners to identify young people with caring responsibilities and ensure their needs are known and supported well. Senior leaders and staff should, as planned, promote the awareness of the role of young people who have caring responsibilities. This should support effective planning of support and ensure all young people who have caring responsibilities are identified and helped.
- Overall attendance is in line with the national average and is showing slight improvements in 2024/25 and 2025/26. In 2023/24 the school's rate of persistent absence was above the national average. Senior leaders, pupil support staff and other key staff monitor rigorously the attendance of young people. They work together with young people and their families to reduce barriers and improve engagement with school. Young people who require a part time timetable engage with these through a rigorous planning process. They are reviewed regularly with young people, parents and partners and adapted appropriately. Senior leaders should, as planned, ensure that actions to address late arrival to class are included within the attendance strategy and their impact reviewed regularly.
- Positively, exclusions have reduced within the school from 2018/19. An increasing focus on restorative approaches along with support by staff and the development of targeted interventions are supporting young people to be included more effectively.

- Most young people feel safe and that they are treated respectfully by staff and their peers. Young people develop their knowledge and understanding of equality, diversity and multi-faith issues in a few curriculum areas. A few young people work well with staff to lead groups and activities effectively to celebrate cultural diversity. For example, cultural celebration days. This supports young people to understand and respect others. This also supports individual young people to feel included and is developing their confidence as they celebrate and share their own cultural identity. All young people would benefit from learning in more depth about the full range of protected characteristics in line with Catholic and school values.
- A few young people and staff are developing approaches to increase the awareness of gender-based violence and equalities. A next step for senior leaders is to develop strategic planning to ensure that young people learn about equalities, diversity and discrimination progressively across the curriculum. This should support young people further to recognise and challenge discrimination, prejudice and intolerance.
- 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 development have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

### 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

- From 2021/22 to 2024/25, almost all young people achieved CfE third level in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. In 2021/22 and 2022/23 all young people achieved in literacy. Literacy attainment is consistently above local authority and national levels. Numeracy attainment has generally been in line or above local authority and national levels.
- From 2021/22 to 2024/25, most young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy by the end of S3. This is consistently above local authority and national levels. In 2021/22, most young people achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy by the end of S3. From 2022/23 to 2024/25 this declined to the majority of young people achieving CfE fourth level numeracy and has remained constant. In 2021/22, CfE fourth level numeracy attainment was above local authority and national levels, however, from 2022/23 to 2024/25 it has fallen below local authority levels.
- Staff within the English and mathematics departments engage in moderation and verification activities. These activities are supporting staff to develop a clear understanding of achievement of a level. As a result, teacher professional judgements are increasingly reliable and robust.
- Within the BGE, young people who require additional support in their learning make strong progress. By the end of S3, in literacy, almost all young people achieve third level, and most achieve fourth level. In numeracy, almost all young people achieve third level, and the majority achieve fourth level.
- Senior leaders use tracking and monitoring data well to identify young people who require interventions to support their progress in literacy and numeracy. Interventions to support young people are introduced timeously. As a result of these interventions, targeted young people are making strong progress in their learning.

#### Senior Phase

##### Leavers

- Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, a few young people left school with no literacy or numeracy qualifications.

## Literacy

- Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, most young people leaving school achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better in literacy, in line with the virtual comparator (VC). Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, a majority young people leaving school achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy. Between 2019/20 and 2022/23 this was in line with the VC. In 2023/24, this was significantly much higher than the VC.
- Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, almost all young people leaving school who require additional support in their learning achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy, consistently above the VC. Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, most achieved SCQF level 5 or better, with the exception of 2022/23 where the majority of young people achieved at this level. This was consistently above the VC. Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6, this increased to a majority of young people in 2023/24, consistently above the VC.

## Numeracy

- In 2019/20 and 2020/21, most young people leaving school achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. This declined to a majority of young people from 2021/22 to 2023/24. Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, when compared to the VC, there is no sustained pattern of improvement and in 2023/24 was in line with the VC. Between 2019/20 and 2023/24 a minority of young people leaving school achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy, in line with the VC.
- Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, almost all young people leaving school who require additional support in their learning achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy, consistently above the VC. Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, a majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, with the exception of 2022/23 where a minority of young people achieved at this level. Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, this was above the VC with the exception of 2022/23 where it moved to below the VC. Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This is generally above or in line with the VC.

## Cohorts

### Literacy

- At S4, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy within the five-year period from 2020/21 until 2024/25. In three out of five years, this was significantly higher than the VC. In 2024/25, this was in line with the VC. By S5, as a percentage of the S4 roll, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy from 2020/21 to 2024/25. In four out of the last five years, this was significantly higher than the VC, including 2024/25. By S6, as a percentage of the S4 roll, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy from 2020/21 to 2024/25. In four out of five years, this was significantly higher than the VC.

### Numeracy

- At S4, in 2020/21 a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, significantly lower than the VC. From 2021/22 to 2024/25 this increased to the majority of young people achieving, in line with the VC. By S5, as a percentage of the S4 roll, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy from 2020/21 to 2024/25, in line with the VC. By S6, as a percentage of the S4 roll, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy from 2020/21 to 2024/25. From 2020/21 to 2023/24 this was in line with the VC, in 2024/25 this improved to significantly higher than the VC.

## National qualifications

### English and Maths

- In 2024/25, the percentage of young people presented from National 5 (N5) and Higher English was above the national average. At N5 the percentage of young people who achieved a grade A and grades A-C was generally in line with the national average. The percentage of No Awards was below the national average. At Higher, the percentage of young people who achieved a grade A and grades A-C was below the national average. The percentage of No Awards was above the national average.
- In 2024/25 the percentage of young people presented for N5 Applications of Mathematics was below the national average. The percentage of young people who achieved a grade A or grades A-C was substantially below the national average attainment. Most young people who were presented did not attain. This pattern of attainment in N5 Applications of Mathematics has been consistent over the past five years.
- In 2024/25 the percentage of young people presented for Higher Applications of Mathematics was in line with the national average. The percentage of young people who achieved a grade A or grades A-C was below the national average. The percentage of No Awards was higher than the national average.
- In 2024/25 the percentage of young people presented for N5 and Higher Mathematics was above the national average. At both N5 and Higher level the percentage of young people who achieved a grade A or grades A-C was below the national average. The percentage of No Awards was above the national average.

## Attainment over time

### BGE

- Senior leaders provided data which showed most young people achieve CfE third level in almost all curricular areas outwith English and literacy and mathematics and numeracy, by the end of S3. A majority of young people achieve CfE fourth level in most curricular areas outwith English and literacy and numeracy and mathematics by the end of S3.
- Senior leaders should continue to support staff to engage in regular moderation activities to increase their understanding and confidence in achievement of a level. As planned, senior leaders should continue to improve their use of BGE tracking data and information. This will show clearly the progress that young people are making as they move through the BGE. They should also use this information to support and improve course choice, progression and attainment in the senior phase.

## Senior phase

- Recently introduced tracking systems are supporting how staff monitor the progress of young people in the senior phase. Senior leaders use data well to identify young people who require support to progress. They introduce timely interventions for targeted groups of young people and as a result are supporting them to make better progress.

## Leavers

- When using average complementary tariff scores, the attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of young people from 2020/21 to 2023/24 was significantly higher than the VC. The attainment for the middle attaining 60% was in line with the VC until 2023/24 when this

improved to significantly higher than the VC. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people was in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2021/22, this declined to significantly lower than the VC in 2022/23 and moved back in line with the VC in 2023/24.

- Generally, the attainment of young people who left school between 2020/21 and 2023/24 who require additional support in their learning is above the VC.

## Cohorts

- At S4, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people has been significantly higher or significantly much higher from 2020/21 to 2024/25. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% has been significantly higher or significantly much higher than the VC from 2020/21 to 2023/24, this was in line with the VC in 2024/25. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people has been in line with the VC over the last five years.
- In S5, as a percentage of the S4 roll, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% of young people has been significantly higher or significantly much higher in four of the last five years. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people has generally been in line with the VC, with the exception of 2022/23 where attainment was significantly higher than the VC.
- In S6, as a percentage of the S4 roll, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% of young people has been significantly higher or significantly much higher in four of the last five years. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people has generally been in line with the VC for the last five years.

## Breadth and Depth

- At S4, from 2020/21 to 2024/25, almost all young people achieve one or more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better. This is significantly much higher than the VC over the five-year period. From 2020/21 to 2024/25, most young people achieve three or more qualifications at this level, with the exception of 2022/23 and 2024/25 where it declined to the majority of young people. From 2020/21 to 2023/24, this was significantly much higher than the VC and in 2024/25 was significantly higher than the VC. From 2020/21 to 2022/23, the majority of young people achieved five or more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better. This declined to a significant minority of young people in 2023/24 and 2024/25. From 2020/21 to 2023/24 this was significantly higher than the VC and in 2024/25 moved to in line with the VC. From 2020/21 to 2024/25, the majority of young people achieved one or more qualifications at SCQF level 5A or better. In 2020/21 and 2021/22, this was significantly higher than the VC. Since 2022/23 this has been in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieve two or more to five or more qualifications at this level. This is generally in line with the VC, with the exception of 2021/22, when this was significantly higher than the VC. In the last three years the percentage of young people achieving one or more to three or more qualifications has declined.
- By S5, from 2020/21 to 2024/25, the majority of young people achieve two or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C or better. In three of the five years, this has been significantly much higher or significantly higher than the VC. A minority of young people achieve three or more to five or more qualifications at the same level across the same time period. In 2024/25, this was in line with the VC. This was significantly higher than the VC in 2020/21 and 2022/23. In the last three years the percentage of young people attaining one or more to five

or more qualifications has declined. A minority of young people achieve two or more qualifications at SCQF level 6A or better from 2020/21 to 2024/25. In two of the last five years, this was significantly higher than the VC, and in 2024/25 is in line with the VC. Young people's achievement of three or more qualifications at the same level has declined over time from a minority to a few young people in the most recent year of data. In four of the last five years this was in line with the VC. A few young people achieve five or more qualifications at SCQF level 6A or better from 2020/21 to 2024/25, this is generally in line with the VC. In the last three years the percentage of young people attaining one or more to five or more qualifications has declined.

- By S6, from 2020/21 to 2024/25, the majority of young people achieved one or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C or better. In four of the five years, this was significantly much higher or significantly higher than the VC. From 2020/21 to 2024/25, the majority of young people achieved three or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C or better, with the exception of 2022/23 and 2024/25 where just under half of young people achieved. In four out of the last five years, this has been significantly higher than the VC. From 2020/21 to 2024/25, a minority of young people achieved five or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C or better. In two of the last five years this has been significantly higher than the VC and in 2024/25 this moved to in line with the VC. In the last three years the percentage of young people achieving one or more to five or more qualifications has increased. A minority of young people achieve one or more to three or more qualifications at SCQF level 6A or better across the five-year period. The percentage of young people who achieve five or more qualifications at SCQF level 6A or better has declined from a minority of young people in 2020/21 and 2021/22 to a few young people from 2022/23 to 2024/25. In 2022/23, this was significantly lower than the VC, moving to in line with the VC in 2023/24 and 2024/25. In 2024/25, the percentage of young people achieving one or more qualification has increased. However, the percentage of young people achieving two or more to five or more qualifications has declined.
- By S6, a minority of young people achieve one or more qualifications at SCQF level 7C or better from 2020/21 to 2024/25, with the exception of 2022/23 when a few achieved. This is generally in line with the VC. A few young people achieve two or more to three or more qualifications at SCQF level 7C or better. This is in line with the VC. From 2020/21 to 2024/25, a few young people achieve one or more to three or more qualifications at SCQF level 7A or better.
- Senior leaders and staff offer a range of qualifications at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6 beyond National Qualifications. This is supporting the attainment of all young people, specifically those who experience barriers to their learning. Senior leaders should continue to, as planned, review the awards offered to ensure they provide sufficient support and challenge, increasing the range of learning pathways for young people in the senior phase.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievement**

- A majority of young people are participating in achievement activities both during the school day and in their communities. Young people are gaining confidence and skills such as team working, through achievement activities including sport, performing arts, enterprise, faith, hobbies and uniformed organisations. For example, young people undertaking effective sports leadership and coaching programmes gain communication, leadership and negotiation skills. They do this by organising and delivering sports activities for children and other young people.

- Young people are increasing their understanding of the challenges others face, through volunteering, charity and faith-based activities. Young people, particularly those in S5 and S6, contribute well to their community and others' learning through volunteering. Most extra-curricular clubs are co-facilitated by young people and staff. Young people in S6 support other young people to increase their knowledge and understanding by running MVP activities. Young Carers' Ambassadors are starting to increase awareness of young carers amongst their peers. There is a need to build on the leadership skills young people gain through such activities, to increase young people's participation in decision making in school life.
- Where achievements are known they are celebrated, including through events, newsletters and social media. A minority of parents and young people return termly forms about young people's out of school achievements. The tracking of use of meta-skills is an identified school priority. However, overall achievements and skills are not sufficiently tracked. As a result, it is unclear which individuals and cohorts are not participating, and young people are not sufficiently supported to build their skills across experiences. School staff should now work with partners and young people, to better track achievements and skills gained both within and outwith school.
- Staff are increasingly supporting young people to gain awards. For example, most young people in S4 gaining a SCQF level 6 First Aid award following a two-day course. However, only a minority of young people gain recognised national awards for the achievement activities they are undertaking. Staff need to both develop awareness of available national awards, improve and co-ordinate approaches to award delivery. Strengthening this approach will broaden opportunities for young people to gain national awards that recognise their learning and match their future ambitions. A minority of young people are gaining Saltire Awards for their volunteering. School staff should work with partners to ensure all young people who volunteer gain this award.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Senior leaders and pupil support staff rigorously track the progress and attainment of young people who may face barriers to their learning and attainment. This includes a specific focus on tracking and monitoring attendance and progress of targeted groups of young people. For example, young people who are care experienced, young people who require additional support with their learning and those who reside in SIMD deciles 1 and 2. Senior leaders provided information to show that in 2024/25 these targeted groups of young people attained above the VC. Senior leaders should consider extending this approach to groups of young people who may face other barriers to their learning and the progress that they are making, using tracking data to support this.
- Senior leaders plan the use of PEF funding effectively to reduce the cost of the school day and support reducing barriers to learning. This includes funding key staff, training, resources and targeted interventions. Key staff work well with young people to improve their attendance and engagement in school, supported by targeted interventions the attainment of these young people is improving.
- When using complementary tariff scores, the attainment of young people who left school and who reside within SIMD deciles 1-3 was significantly higher than the VC in 2023/24, this is an improvement from 2022/23 when it was in line with the VC.

- Between 2019/20 and 2023/24 almost all young people leaving school entered a positive destination. The percentage of young people entering a positive destination has increased from 2021/22 to 2023/24. Most young people entered further or higher education in 2023/24 and a minority of young people entered training or employment. The school effectively track and monitor young people to support the identification of those who may be at risk of not progressing to a positive destination. They work well with partners and introduce effective interventions to support these young people. Senior leaders should now consider how data can be used to identify any additional barriers that young people may face in progressing to a positive destination and plan effectively to mitigate against these.

## Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE 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.

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