

23 June 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In May 2025, HM Inspectors published a letter on Tarbert Academy. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Argyll and Bute Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to young people and worked closely with the acting 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.

There is a need to improve the pace of change through developing leadership at all levels and a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Supported well by the local authority, senior leaders and staff have made sufficient progress since the original inspection. This is led effectively by the acting headteacher and senior leadership team, who have established an effective culture of collaboration across the school.

Senior leaders have clarified remits and strengthened accountability across the staff team. They are increasing the leadership capacity of staff and strengthening the improvement planning process. Middle leaders now lead whole-school priorities and are increasingly improving their faculties with confidence. Regular professional dialogue and more robust attainment meetings between senior and middle leaders are raising expectations of children and young people's progress in learning. Staff are working collegiately across the primary and secondary. This is improving consistency for learners, supported by emerging curriculum leadership in the primary. Senior leaders have strengthened approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. These are clarifying the school's strategic direction, underpinned by a refreshed vision and values that promote positive behaviour and collaboration. Senior leaders are aligning effectively their improvement planning processes to ensure more active learner participation, and stronger parental engagement. This is enhancing the school's inclusive, consultative culture.

Senior leaders should now strengthen the rigour and consistency of how they monitor and evaluate the work of the school. They need to ensure activities are focused clearly on the precise actions that are required to improve further all children and young people's outcomes. All staff and learners should continue to embed the school's values consistently in daily practice. Senior leaders need to build on the positive work of developing collegiate approaches across and within sectors. Middle leaders should strengthen their use of attainment and wider evidence to evaluate more rigorously the impact of improvements

across their faculties. Senior leaders and staff should continue expanding opportunities for learner and parent influence in shaping ongoing school improvement.

Teachers should ensure that they meet the needs of children and young people more through the effective use of assessment information.

From the original inspection, teachers have made positive progress over the past year to meet more effectively the needs of children and young people.

Across the school, almost all children and young people participate positively in their learning. There are clear improvements reflected in the increasingly calm, inclusive and nurturing learning environments. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting positive relationships and behaviour. Teachers now use a broader range of formative and summative assessment information to inform learning and teaching. They are using effectively whole-school planning and tracking systems to provide clearer oversight of children and young people's progress across the broad general education (BGE). Staff use relevant professional learning, including peer observations and moderation activities, to strengthen their confidence in making assessment judgments. They use information about learner's additional needs well to support their progress in learning. Staff have increased their focus on wellbeing to improve children and young people's engagement, motivation and confidence across stages.

Teachers should strengthen further the consideration of assessment within the planning process, particularly in the primary. Staff need to use assessment information more consistently to identify children who are capable of exceeding national expectations. They should also use this information to plan appropriately challenging learning for all children and young people in most lessons.

Teachers in the secondary should continue to develop robust assessment practices to help young people understand better their progress in learning. They need to ensure more consistent, high-quality written feedback across the school, clearly identifying next steps for improvement. Senior leaders should continue to refine how they monitor the progress of learners who are not on track to attain appropriately. Staff should continue to look outwards to seek best practice in learning and teaching approaches.

Staff should have high expectations of what children and young people can achieve. They need to implement a whole school approach to raise attainment across the curriculum.

Senior leaders and staff continue to make progress in this area.

Senior leaders have established a coherent approach to monitoring children and young people's progress and attainment across the BGE and senior phase. Senior leaders use data more effectively to support accurate judgements about children and young people's progress. They are targeting staff's professional learning to focus on providing the support children and young people require to succeed. Staff have developed a more aspirational numeracy strategy. This is beginning to improve outcomes for young people, particularly by

S3. Young people benefit from enhanced literacy and numeracy provision in S3 and well-planned senior phase supports, including revision programmes and supported study. Senior leaders are reviewing strategically the whole school timetable. These approaches are raising expectations and improving attainment, particularly at S4. Senior leaders and staff have developed more robust approaches to tracking children and young people's achievement. This is supporting further their motivation and participation in activities to achieve.

Senior and middle leaders should continue to refine their use of attainment and achievement data to identify and address consistently all gaps in learners' progress. This includes identified gaps in literacy, the attainment of leavers and the attainment of young people in S5. Senior leaders should keep the senior phase curriculum under regular review to ensure it maximises attainment and achievement for all young people, appropriate to their needs. Staff should continue developing approaches that help learners identify, articulate and apply the skills they develop through wider achievements across the curriculum. Senior leaders and staff should proceed with plans to implement a manageable whole-school approach to skills development and tracking.

Teachers should review the curriculum to ensure that young people build on their prior learning more effectively.

Teachers have made positive progress in reviewing the curriculum to ensure children and young people's experiences build more effectively on prior learning across the 2–18 context. Senior leaders and staff have developed a whole-school learning and teaching toolkit. This sets clear expectations to staff and is improving consistency in routines and lesson structure. In most classes, teachers use well-planned starter activities which help learners reconnect meaningfully with prior learning. Most learners understand the purpose of their learning and how to be successful. They are supported well in classes by clear explanations and an appropriately brisk pace of learning. Teachers' increasing and effective use of national Benchmarks and moderation activities is strengthening confidence in assessment judgements. Staff share effectively attainment, wellbeing and support information at points of transition. This is improving the continuity and coherence of learners' experiences across stages of transition.

Curriculum leaders should strengthen progression frameworks across all curricular areas to ensure consistent, progressive learning across the full 2–18 context. Senior leaders must address gaps in learners' statutory entitlements, ensuring all young people receive progressive religious and moral education (RME) across the senior phase and modern language learning in line with national guidance. Senior leaders should continue to review curriculum structures to secure breadth, balance and entitlements for all learners.

Staff need to raise the profile of equality and diversity to prepare learners fully for life beyond school.

Senior leaders and staff have progressed this area by increasing the range of opportunities to promote equality, diversity and children's rights.

Children and young people respond positively to learning about equality and diversity through discussion in RME and personal and social education (PSE). They also benefit from leading whole school themed assemblies. Staff offer well-considered whole-school events, including rights-based initiatives, charitable competitions and events, anti-racism activities, themed learning and visits to cultural and religious centres. These approaches are strengthening learners' awareness of and respect for difference. Staff have secured funding which is being used to improve the range and quality of diverse library texts to support inclusive learning. Staff use thoughtfully the recently established school values to underpin a shared understanding of rights and fairness. Staff have developed clear systems to respond to bullying, alongside emerging peer-mentor approaches. These are improving confidence in how any bullying concerns are addressed.

Senior and middle leaders should continue to strengthen their strategic overview of equality, diversity and anti-discrimination work to ensure learning is progressive and coherent across the curriculum. Staff should extend learning about equalities beyond RME and PSE so that all young people explore diversity in all curricular areas and develop confidence to challenge discrimination. Senior leaders should work with learners, staff and families to secure a shared understanding of bullying. They need to strengthen their analysis of recorded incidents to ensure this matches the lived experience of learners. Staff should continue to build children and young people's leadership of this area, including peer-mentoring and preventative approaches.

Further aspects of school/setting improvement

Senior leaders submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children and young people. In addition, a sample of safeguarding documentation was sampled and relevant observations were undertaken. Areas identified during the original inspection were discussed, alongside a few additional areas for improvement, with school and local authority. This included a discussion about previous approaches to exclusion and HM Inspectors are confident that current processes adhere to national guidance in this area.

What happens next?

The school has made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Argyll and Bute Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Patricia Cameron
HM Inspector

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