

29 April 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Arbroath High School. 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. 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 need to provide clearer strategic direction and streamline school priorities to ensure school improvement.

This area for improvement is being addressed successfully. The headteacher has prioritised rightly those areas that will have the greatest impact on learners by developing clearer expectations across a number of strategic areas. The school improvement plan has been streamlined in most areas, although there remains a need to reframe improvement actions to demonstrate better improved outcomes for learners.

The senior leadership team have strengthened the strategic direction they provide in most remit areas. The deputy headteachers have greater clarity regarding their roles and responsibilities as remits have been redefined. They have developed clear actions plans for implementing improvements and provide stronger strategic direction. The senior leadership team should continue to be more rigorous and systematic in evaluating the progress and impact of change for learners.

Significant progress has been made in increasing rigour and challenge in school-level attainment meetings. Fewer young people are being presented for both National 4 and National 5 in the same subject as a result of improved monitoring and tracking across the school. Staff should continue their work to ensure that dual presentations are by exception only.

Middle leaders should ensure that all staff monitor and evaluate their work so that the attainment of young people improves as a result.

This area for improvement is being addressed successfully. Middle leaders have introduced a greater number of quality assurance activities such as classroom observations, focus groups with learners, and tracking and monitoring discussions with classroom teachers to help inform priorities. These priorities are more focused on evidence from accurate monitoring and evaluating activities such as the analysis of attainment. Overall, approaches to monitoring and evaluating practice within respective faculties is beginning to align better with national standards and expectations. There is evidence of greater success for young people in their attainment in National Qualifications in some measures.

There is an improved culture of self-evaluation across the school, with middle leaders and classroom teachers more effectively evaluating their practice.

Classroom teachers should plan and deliver more engaging, varied and interesting tasks and activities set at the right level of difficulty for all young people.

This area for improvement is being addressed successfully. Teachers are now taking better account of opportunities for young people to engage actively in their learning. Teachers have benefited from professional learning that is better engaging young people and developing their confidence by offering a greater variety of teaching approaches. This includes young people learning independently, working collaboratively with peers and making greater use of digital technology. Young people report an improvement in leading their own learning.

More young people now report that they are able to influence what and how they learn. There are strong examples of seeking the views of young people, particularly in mathematics, which can be shared widely. Young people feel more motivated by having their views taken account of.

Young people are benefiting from higher expectations and more appropriate challenge that is better meeting their needs. Teachers now plan more lessons that are stimulating and enjoyable. Senior and middle leaders are addressing the underlying issue of low expectations successfully. There are promising signs of a culture of ambition characterised by higher expectations of young people's progress and attainment.

Senior leaders should improve staff's understanding of their roles and responsibilities in supporting the wellbeing of all young people.

This remains an area for improvement. The school is still at the very early stages of developing a shared understanding of wellbeing amongst young people, staff, parents and partners. The wellbeing indicators are not yet being used consistently to support young people. There is significant scope for the school to raise the profile of the wellbeing indicators and to use them to track and monitor young people's progress more consistently, as well as to inform planning. Young people could be supported more to enable them to better understand the relationship between wellbeing and their ability to achieve success.

Teachers should review the curriculum for S1-S3 to ensure that young people build on their prior learning more effectively.

This area for improvement is being successfully addressed. Senior leaders have made significant progress in reviewing the totality of the curriculum. S1 provides young people now with much better continuity and progression in a greater number of subject areas, building more effectively on what they have learned and achieved at primary school. Middle leaders across curricular areas are establishing links with primary schools to better support progression as young people move from P7 to S1.

What happens next?

The school has made positive progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress for the area for improvement related to wellbeing within 12 months of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland 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.

Guch Dhillon
HM Inspector