

4 February 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In April 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Dyce Academy. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeen City 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.

Improve attainment and increase expectations for all young people.

Senior leaders and staff have developed a stronger culture of aspiration across the school. They have implemented approaches for young people to experience an appropriate range of courses more suited to their aspirations and needs. Senior leaders and staff are using data more effectively to target strategies to improve young people's attainment. Although young people's attainment is beginning to improve in a few areas, more time is needed for the school's work to impact positively on improving the attainment of all young people.

An important next step is for senior leaders and staff to improve the reliability of data about young people's attainment in S1 to S3 across all subject areas. Senior leaders and staff need to improve attainment in the senior phase as a matter of priority. There is a need to improve young people's literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders need to ensure that improvements in attainment for all young people are sustained. They should improve the attainment of young people by S5 and ensure that recent improvements for cohorts at S4 and S6 are sustained. Staff need to ensure that young people affected by socio-economic disadvantage are supported to make better progress in their learning and attain appropriately.

Develop more robust systems to monitor the attainment and progress of all young people.

Senior leaders and staff have developed more effective systems to monitor the progress and attainment of young people. These are beginning to improve aspiration and support for young people. Led effectively by the headteacher, the whole school strategy to monitor the attainment of young people is well understood across the school.

Staff have increased ownership of improving standards and outcomes for young people. These expectations are embedded in the tracking, monitoring and interventions policy. This has resulted in a more consistent approach by middle leaders in how they track young people's progress across the school. Teachers use a greater range of assessment information to make more reliable judgments about young people's progress. Staff are increasingly using assessment information to identify and support young people who are not making appropriate progress.

Senior leaders have created a helpful whole school overview of young people's attainment. They are supporting staff at all levels to understand better their role in using systems to monitor the progress and attainment of all young people. As a result, staff have a greater understanding of the processes required to improve outcomes for young people. Senior leaders have motivated and empowered staff to improve young people's progress in learning.

Senior leaders should continue to embed systems to ensure that young people make the best possible progress across all curricular areas and stages.

Improve the quality of learners' experiences throughout the school. This should include teachers planning more challenging and relevant learning experiences that allow learners to make better progress as they move through the school.

The headteacher has led a significant drive to improve the quality and consistency of learners' experiences across the school. As a result, more young people are benefitting from improved learning experiences in most areas of the school. Relationships between staff and young people are very positive with mutual respect being a key feature of the school's ethos.

Staff and young people have developed a helpful learning and teaching policy. This has raised expectations of staff and of young people. The implementation of this policy is leading to improved classroom routines and greater consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across most subject areas.

Teachers are improving the engagement of young people in their classes and learners are taking greater responsibility for their own learning. Staff are developing more effective approaches which are beginning to support most young people in understanding how to be successful in their learning.

What happens next?

The school has made progress since the original inspection. However, more time is needed to measure how well the school's work is improving the attainment of all young people. Therefore, we will ask for a report from Aberdeen City Council on the progress the school has made in addressing the next steps outlined in this letter within twenty-three 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 Aberdeen City Council, that we intend to take.

Patricia Cameron
HM Inspector