

Summarised inspection findings

Doon Academy

East Ayrshire Council

19 March 2024

Key contextual information

School Name: Doon Academy
Council: East Ayrshire Council
SEED number: 8244138
Roll (Dec 23): 230

Attendance is generally below the national average.

Exclusions are generally above the national average.

In September 2022, 30.4 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2022, 80.4 per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2022, the school reported that 54.4 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

The headteacher has been in post for nine years and is supported by two deputy headteachers, one of whom is in an acting capacity.

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

- There is a positive, caring ethos across all classes. The headteacher and senior leaders have prioritised the importance of developing a nurturing supportive learning environment. Young people and staff are mutually respectful, which leads to calm and settled classroom experiences. Staff have worked together well to develop an agreed structure for lessons that supports more consistent learning and teaching. This is at the early stages of showing a positive impact on practice. A next step for staff will be to develop this approach to include an agreed pedagogy that will lead to a more consistent learning experience for all young people.
- Staff and young people have worked together well to improve the learning environment. This work has resulted in more inclusive classrooms. Young people are very positive about the improved environment and are proud of the difference they have made. This has helped young people to feel included. It has also helped a few young learners settle more easily into a classroom environment.
- A majority of young people are eager to participate appropriately in learning. All staff should continue to ensure they prioritise improving young people's attendance and timekeeping. Staff should include young people and their parents in discussions on how to improve attendance.

- Staff have started to review and develop classroom practice to best meet the needs of learners. However, across the school, the pace of this change is too slow. Most teachers need to improve aspects of teaching such as differentiation, to ensure all young people are appropriately challenged. Most lessons, especially in the broad general education (BGE), are overly teacher led and not suited to the learning needs of individuals. As a result, a few young people are passive in their learning and often disengage. A minority of young people carry out low-level tasks with limited learning or engagement. In a few examples of learning and teaching, teachers plan activities to engage young people and support them to participate fully and lead their learning. In most lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. In a minority of lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to check young people's knowledge. Teachers are not yet consistently checking for understanding during lessons. Teachers should now develop and extend their use of questioning to engage all young people in learning. This should include using open-ended questions to develop higher order thinking skills.
- Teachers share the purpose of learning in almost all classes. In a few classes, teachers share with pupils what successful learning will look like. Teachers now need to link peer, self and teacher assessment clearly to agreed criteria against which success in learning can be evaluated. This will help to ensure young people have a good understanding of their strengths and next steps in learning. In turn, this will enable young people to take increasing responsibility for planning and improving their own learning. Support staff need to have clearer strategies to support individual needs. Senior leaders should include support staff in professional learning focussed on approaches to support young people with an additional support need. This is an important next step to ensure young people's needs are met well consistently.
- Most departments have started to use a range of relevant assessment approaches to form holistic judgements on learners' progress within the BGE. This is not yet informing the planning of next steps in learning nor leading to effective interventions to raise attainment. Senior and middle leaders should work collaboratively to further develop approaches to using national benchmarks. This will assist all departments in ensuring high-quality assessment informs interventions to raise attainment.
- A few departments have developed their use of moderation in the BGE to improve teachers' planning and confidence in making assessment judgements. Teachers have engaged in moderation activities in literacy with colleagues from associated primaries. These have improved teachers' confidence in forming reliable assessment judgements. These activities should now be extended across all curricular areas.
- Staff use assessment data systematically in the senior phase to set aspirational targets and track learners' progress. Learner conversations take place in the BGE and senior phase. When these conversations are of high quality and personalised, they assist learners in understanding their progress and next steps in learning. Staff should now ensure greater consistency in the quality, use and impact of learner conversations.
- Senior leaders should continue with their plans to introduce a tracking, monitoring and intervention system in the BGE. Teachers and middle leaders should increase their use of robust assessment data in the BGE to track learners' progress, identify appropriate interventions and evaluate their effectiveness.
- Overall, senior leaders need to ensure all staff have higher expectations of all young people, particularly those in the BGE. This will lead to a faster pace of learning that stretches young people, extends their learning and prepares them better for learning in the senior phase. Senior leaders should now take a greater strategic lead in developing learning and teaching across the school.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. 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 of urgency.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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

Senior Leaders have identified attendance as a barrier to attainment and have prioritised Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) resources to support the drive to improve attendance. There has been a focus on developing positive relationships across the whole school community. This is having a positive impact on the number of pupils being excluded.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

BGE

- In 2022/23, the majority of young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level in literacy, and a few achieved CfE fourth level in literacy. These results are in line with previous attainment in literacy for 2021/22 and below local and national levels of attainment in literacy.
- Teachers with responsibility for literacy work engage in moderation activities with colleagues from other local authority secondary schools and their cluster primary schools. As a result, their judgements regarding young people's attainment in literacy are becoming more robust and consistent.
- In 2022/23, the majority of young people achieved CfE third level in numeracy, and a minority achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy. This represents a steady decline in attainment at third level since 2018/19. There has been an inconsistent pattern of attainment in numeracy at fourth level over the same period.
- Senior leaders in the Doon Academy Education Group have identified the need to develop greater consistency in the use of approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. They have prioritised development time during Inservice days each session to focus on moderation activities.

Senior Phase

Leavers (literacy)

- Most young people leaving school between 2017/18 and 2021/22 achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better in literacy. The majority of young people leaving over this period achieved SCQF level 5 in literacy. Both measures have been in line with the virtual comparator (VC). In 2021/22, a minority of young people left school with an SCQF level 6 or above in literacy. This is in line with the VC for 2021/22 having been significantly much lower than the VC in 2019/20 and 2020/21. Over a five-year period, there has been a decline in the number of young people achieving SCQF level 6 in literacy.

Leavers (numeracy)

- The majority of young people leaving school between 2017/18 and 2021/22 achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy. This is in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 numeracy between 2017/18 and 2021/22. This is in line with the VC. No young people leaving school achieved SCQF level 6 in 2021/22. At S4, a minority of young people achieve SCQF level 5 or better. Although this shows improvement over time, performance remains significantly lower than the VC. By S5, in the latest two years 2021/22 and 2022/23, the majority achieve this level which is an improvement from the previous three years where only a minority achieved this level. By S5 and by S6, performance at SCQF level 6 remains weak. By S6, performance at this level is significantly much lower than the VC in the last three years.
- Senior leaders and staff have identified improving numeracy as a school improvement priority. They have introduced strategies to improve attainment in this area such as working with Doon Education Group schools to identify good practice and staff participation in associated school groups moderation activities. Senior leaders should continue to track learners' attainment, intervening as appropriate to ensure all learners can achieve as best as possible.

Cohorts (literacy)

- At S4, almost all young people achieve SCQF level 4 or better in literacy in 2020/21 and 2021/22 with most young people achieving SCQF level 4 or better in literacy in 2022/23. By S5 and S6, the majority of young people achieve SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. A minority of young people achieve SCQF level 6 in literacy at S6. Attainment in literacy is broadly in line with the VC from 2018/19 to 2022/23 across S4, S5 and S6 at SCQF level 5.

Cohorts (numeracy)

- In 2022/23, almost young people in S4 achieved at least SCQF level 3 numeracy. This is in line with the VC but is a decline from 2021/22 when this measure had been significantly much higher than the VC. By S5 most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy and this is in line with the VC. For young people in S6, this is an improvement from 2021/22 when this measure had been significantly much lower than the VC. A few young people achieved numeracy at SCQF level 6. This had been significantly lower than the VC in the 2021/22.

National Qualifications

- Young people's attainment in National Qualifications (NQs) in English in the senior phase is weak. At both National 5 and Higher, young people's attainment is significantly lower than the national average.
- Senior leaders have identified the need to improve attainment in mathematics for all learners. Attainment in N5 and Higher Mathematics is generally in line with the national averages, although very small numbers of pupils are presented for these qualifications.

Attainment over time

BGE

- Senior leaders track and monitor progress in literacy and numeracy for all learners in the senior phase. They are at an early stage of tracking and monitoring across all subject areas from a whole school perspective. Middle leaders track and monitor progress in their own subject areas and are at the early stages of developing moderation partnerships with local schools. Senior

leaders need to be able to use tracking and monitoring data to demonstrate improvements in attainment in the BGE over time for all curricular areas.

Senior Phase

Improving attainment for all

Leavers

- Attainment for all leavers in the lowest attaining 20% of young people was in line with VC from 2018/19 to 2021/22, when compared using complementary tariff points. Attainment for the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people was significantly much lower in 2021/22 having been in line with the VC in 2020/21. Senior and middle leaders should continue to review the curriculum offer for all learners to ensure appropriate levels of aspiration and challenge.
- Attainment for young people with an additional support need (ASN) is in line with the VC. Teachers must include all appropriate supports for learners with an ASN and this will lead to stronger outcomes for this group of learners.

Cohorts

- Senior and Middle leaders have correctly identified the need to reconsider the curriculum offer for senior phase learners. The aim of this is to improve attainment for all learners. Senior staff and staff with responsibility for pupil support should continue to work closely with young people and their families on course choice options. The pattern of attainment since 2018/19 has been inconsistent with no clear pattern of improvement during this period. Senior leaders have identified the impact that the pandemic has had on learners and the subsequent impact this has had on attainment.

Breadth and Depth

- Attainment in S4 demonstrates a decline in attainment in comparison to with the VC. A minority of young people in S4 achieve 5 or more awards at SCQF level 4. A few young people attain 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5C. There is significant room for improvement in attainment for S4.
- By S5 in 2022/23, the percentage of young people achieving one or more to three or more awards at SCQF level 5C is in line with the VC. The percentage of young people attaining 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5C is significantly much lower than the VC having been in line with the VC in 2021/22. Attainment at SCQF level 6C or better for one or more to five or more courses at SCQF level 6C is in line with the VC. A few young people attain five or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better. Overall, attainment in S5 must be improved.
- By S6, in 2022/23, there has been an improvement at SCQF level 5C or better and SCQF level 5A or better, for one or more to five or more courses when compared to the VC. Measures for learners in S6 achieving one or more or five or more courses at SCQF level 6C has been in line with the VC each year between 2018/19 and 2022/23. There is no clear pattern of improvement over all measures for young people in S6. Senior leaders are reviewing courses offered in the senior phase to better meet the needs of learners.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- A few young people enhance their skills in team working and leadership through participating in a variety of activities and achievements. A few young people also participate in personal

development awards, leadership awards and volunteering. Staff should now ensure that all participating young people complete these awards.

- Young people's achievements are celebrated well at school events, on noticeboards and in local and social media. Merits, coloured wrist bands and badges are awarded at termly colours assemblies and families are informed of young people's achievements through praise postcards. The school's 'positive noticing' initiative, based on the school values, enables all staff to contribute to celebrating the success of young people.
- In S6, young people are provided with structured opportunities for leadership development through a volunteering enrichment programme. This encourages young people to volunteer in departments, in primary schools or in the local community more widely. This programme of volunteering is supporting young people to develop their communication and team working skills. In S3, a few young people are developing their leadership skills through participating in a Young Person's Leadership Academy with Columba 1400. The next step for senior leaders will be to include more young people in this initiative.
- Most young people develop their skills for life, learning and work through the effective Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) programme, in conjunction with the DYW Ayrshire Team. As a result of this, a few young people have gained the Enterprise and Employability Award.
- A few young people articulate the skills they are developing such as leadership and communication skills. Staff now need to ensure all young people across the school have opportunities to achieve and have a clear understanding of the skills they are developing. This should also help all young people to understand and apply these skills in a variety of contexts. Staff should ensure they track and monitor young people's achievements to identify and address any gaps.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a strong understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school. As a result of this, they place an appropriate focus on reducing the poverty related attainment gap and on removing barriers to learning. They seek to improve experiences for young people affected by poverty, those with lower levels of attendance and those with additional support needs. Senior leaders and staff recognise the importance of building positive relationships with families to achieve these aims. The school community recently achieved silver accreditation as a Rights Respecting School. As a result of this young people are able to identify their rights and respect the rights of others.
- The PEF allocation has been used to employ additional staff, provide resources and ensure young people are able to participate in events and trips. Attainment champions work with a targeted group of young people to provide them with individualised support. Learners say that this support has helped them to keep on track with their learning. A few learners have also received additional support from the Home Link workers. This has helped the supported group of young people to focus on improving their attendance. Senior leaders should consider ways to track the impact of such interventions on individuals to identify best practice.
- Almost all young people move to a positive destination on leaving school.

Quality of provision of Special Unit (contributes to school evaluations)

The supported learning centre (SLC) currently supports 32 young people from S1 to S6. Young people have a range of additional support needs. At the time of the inspection 23 young people were working within the BGE and 11 young people were working at the senior phase. In addition to learning within the SLC, all young people access subjects in mainstream classes.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Young people in the SLC benefit from very positive relationships with staff and with each other. Staff have created a nurturing and supportive ethos that helps young people to feel safe. Young people talk positively about their learning and the support they receive in the SLC. They have good opportunities to participate in lessons and wider school activities with their mainstream peers. Relationships between young people attending the SLC and staff and other learners are positive and inclusive.
- Almost all young people engage well in their learning. They have an appropriate understanding about the purpose of lessons. The majority of learners know the qualifications they are working towards. A few young people talk about their strengths and what they find challenging. Staff should support young people further to understand their own learning.
- In most lessons, activities are planned and delivered to meet the needs of learners well. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is too slow. In a few lessons, teachers need to take better account of the individual needs of young people when planning and delivering activities. Some young people experience learning that is too easy, whilst for others, activities are too challenging and do not take appropriate account of their ability.
- In most lessons, teachers share learning intentions at the beginning of lessons. This helps young people to understand what they are learning and how they will know if they have achieved success. Teachers should make better use of success criteria during and at the end of lessons. This will help young people to gain a better understanding of their own learning and successes. In a few lessons, young people self and peer assess their work. This is helping them to understand what is expected of them. Teachers should include more opportunities for young people to self and peer assess.
- Young people participate in regular learning conversations with staff. These conversations support staff in assessing learners' progress. Young people set personal learning targets based on these discussions. Staff should continue to support learners to understand the purpose of learning conversations and their targets.
- Assessment approaches are based mainly on teacher's professional judgements. Staff in the SLC should now work together to develop a shared understanding of assessment approaches that take account of the individual needs and strengths of young people. Assessment approaches should ensure that all staff have a thorough understanding of the level young people are working at, their individual strengths and the progress they are making. This information should be shared with all staff who are working with young people, including mainstream staff, and inform planning of learning.
- Staff in the SLC track progress young people are making through the broad general education and within the senior phase. Staff should continue to ensure that tracking and monitoring approaches take appropriate account of the progress young people are making and the skills

they are developing. These approaches should have a clear focus on raising attainment and achievement.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

Literacy and Numeracy

- Overall, most young people in the SLC are making appropriate progress in their literacy and numeracy. There is scope for a few young people to attain better.

Literacy

- Almost all young people listen well and respond appropriately. They engage well with novels and stories. They identify the main points from the story and the role of characters. They use a range of methods to record information about their novels such as mind maps and lists. Young people are exploring technical aspects of language such as plurals and suffixes. Staff should ensure that young people have opportunities to write for a range of purposes including within practical and life skills contexts. Almost all young people require further support to help them present their work accurately and neatly. In the senior phase, young people are working towards national qualifications at National 3 and National 4 level.

Numeracy

- Almost all young people understand time using digital and analogue clocks. Young people are successfully completing calculations using the four operations. They are rounding numbers to the nearest hundred and thousand. Young people are reading payslips and understanding net and gross salary. They are calculating budgets based on income and expenditure. In the senior phase, young people are working towards national qualifications at National 3 and National 4 level.

Attainment over time

- Almost all young people are making appropriate progress from prior levels of attainment. With improved approaches to assessment and a better pace of learning, there is scope for a few young people to attain and achieve more. At the BGE, young people are working from early to third level, depending on their strengths and needs. Almost all young people in the senior phase have achieved or are working towards qualifications at National 3 to National 4 level. These are across a range of subjects including numeracy, mathematics, digital media and art.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Young people are developing confidence and skills through whole school activities such as whole school rights-based groups and LGBTI work. Learners are fully involved in whole school events such as shows and fayres. Across the SLC there is a strong focus on staff helping young people to understand and develop the skills they will need beyond school. All learners from S4 to S6 are trained as baristas and run a weekly café for staff and the local community. Young people involved in the café develop employability skills such as communication and team working. Young people have opportunities to develop skills in beauty, gardening and enterprise. Young people in the senior phase participate in work experience and attend college to support their transition after school. In the past three years, all young people have moved to positive destinations. These include college and supported work placements.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a good understanding of the learning, social and emotional needs of young people. They use this information well to identify specific interventions that ensure all young people access learning appropriate to their needs. Staff value learners' views about accessing their learning in the SLC or mainstream school. As a result, young people feel well included in all aspects of the school.

Other relevant evidence

- 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 local authority that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland 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.