

# Summarised inspection findings

**Strathaven Academy**

South Lanarkshire Council

12 December 2023

## Key contextual information

School Name            Strathaven Academy  
Council:                South Lanarkshire Council  
SEED number:        8533830  
Roll:                    1003

Strathaven Academy is situated in the town of Strathaven in South Lanarkshire. The Strathaven Learning Community consists of the Academy and six associated primary schools. The headteacher has been in post for approximately 18 months. There are four depute headteacher posts in the school, with one shared between two members of staff.

Attendance is generally above the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In February 2022, 6.8% of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2022, 2.2% of pupils lived in the 20% most deprived data-zones in Scotland.

In September 2022, the school reported that 25.2% per cent of pupils had additional support needs. Senior leaders have identified that, at present, 42.8% of young people have an additional support need. This continues a generally increasing trend since 2018.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**good**

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

- The young people of Strathaven Academy are friendly, polite and respectful. There is a supportive ethos across the school where young people and staff benefit from highly positive relationships. Staff value all learners as individuals. This sets the tone for calm and supportive learning experiences where young people are keen to participate. They demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning. This is an important strength of the school.
- Young people value opportunities to offer feedback about learning and teaching, and in a minority of faculties young people are now aware of how their feedback helps to influence the design of courses and how they will learn. Senior leaders and faculty heads should continue to develop opportunities for young people to influence teaching and learning across the school.
- In most lessons, young people benefit from learning activities where they can learn independently, with their peers, and in groups. Young people respond well when tasks and activities are motivating. However, in a minority of lessons the pace of learning is too slow with young people spending too much time on passive activities.

- All lessons are well organised and resourced. In almost all classes, teachers offer explanations and instructions which are very clear. Most teachers share the purpose of learning and help young people to understand how they have been successful in meeting these learning purposes. In a few classrooms, young people are involved in planning how success will be measured. Teachers make highly effective use of digital technology in a few classes to support learning, teaching and assessment. In a few classes, young people have opportunities to lead their own learning and to decide how their successes can be assessed. There are a few opportunities for young people to work on extended tasks to help them to deepen their learning. Senior leaders and faculty heads should continue to work with teachers to ensure that all learning activities offer the right level of challenge and are motivating for young people.
- The school should continue to build on examples of strong practice in the use of assessment strategies to help improve young people's learning. Examples include teachers using young people's answers to adapt their lessons and offer immediate feedback, and using questioning skilfully to encourage young people to challenge their own thinking and to deepen learning. Teachers use assessment evidence from these approaches to identify misconceptions and to strengthen young people's recall. In a few lessons, young people benefit from opportunities to engage in peer learning and assessment activities. This is motivating for young people and is helping them to develop confidence in their learning. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that this highly effective practice in how assessment evidence informs responsive planning is shared across the school.
- Teachers in all faculties engage in moderation activity and have a very strong understanding of standards for broad general education (BGE) assessments and courses. This is strengthened by their participation in a local authority collaborative where representatives from faculties work with colleagues from other schools. This opportunity to share assessment approaches and expectations with colleagues is highly valued by teachers. This has led directly to improvements in planning which now incorporates holistic assessments. These are supporting teachers to reach robust and reliable judgements about achievement of a level. They use a wide range of evidence and young people are supported well to describe their current level of learning.
- In the senior phase, all staff have a very strong understanding of assessment standards, supported by a significant number of teachers who undertake Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) duties. This informs one-to-one conversations between young people and their teachers. As a result, most young people can describe the progress they are making with their learning. There is scope to improve this practice by ensuring that learners at all levels are clear about the specific learning activities that will help to improve their learning. This will help young people develop their independence in learning.
- Senior leaders and faculties have a clear rationale and a robust and effective system for tracking and monitoring young people's progress in learning. Teachers make effective use of assessment data to plan learning at an appropriate level. In almost all departments, teachers are clear about how learners in the BGE are making progress through the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. This information about progress is used effectively by teachers as young people transition to senior phase learning to ensure young people's progress builds on previous learning. The progress in this area results from the effective leadership of the headteacher and depute headteachers.
- Senior leaders and faculty heads collate data to identify individual young people and cohorts and monitor their progress in learning. School staff should continue to develop approaches to using assessment evidence to inform planning of tasks and activities. This will help to ensure that all learners make appropriate progress.

- Senior leaders have recently introduced a new learning, teaching and assessment position statement with the aim of establishing expectations for classroom practice and improving consistency of high quality approaches across the school. Staff have worked effectively to produce this position statement on learning and teaching that reflects current research on high-quality pedagogy. The school motto, Together We Thrive, underpins these guidelines. The new position statement is beginning to have a positive effect on improving the quality of teaching. While it has brought a shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching, it has not yet resulted in the consistent application of these principles. Staff across the school should now, as planned, continue their collaborative work to make sure that the learning, teaching and assessment position statement achieves its aims.

## 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.

## 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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

#### Broad General Education (BGE)

- In 2021/22, almost all young people, by the end of S3, achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level in all literacy measures and in numeracy. The majority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in reading and listening and talking and a minority did so in writing. Most achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy. The school's own data from session 2022/23 showed that almost all young people achieved CfE third level in all literacy measures by the end of S3 and most achieved CfE fourth level. Almost all young people achieved fourth level in numeracy. As a result of a range of moderation activities, the assessment evidence underpinning these professional judgements is robust and reliable. A high level of attainment has been maintained in literacy and numeracy over the past three years.
- Young people who require additional support with their learning are making strong progress in their literacy and numeracy. The school's data from session 2022/23 shows that most young people with an additional support need achieved CfE third level in literacy and almost all in numeracy. The majority achieved CfE fourth level in literacy and most in numeracy.

#### Senior Phase Leavers

##### Literacy

- In 2021/22, most young people who left school had achieved SCQF Level 5 or better in literacy, and the majority had achieved SCQF Level 6. This level of leavers' attainment in literacy has been consistent over the past five years and is generally in line with the VC. The attainment in literacy at SCQF Levels 5 and 6 of leavers who require additional support with their learning is generally in line with the VC.

##### Numeracy

- In 2021/22, most young people who left school had achieved SCQF Level 5 in numeracy, and a minority had achieved SCQF Level 6. This level of leavers' attainment in numeracy has been consistent over the past five years. In four of the past five years leavers' attainment in numeracy at SCQF Level 6 has been significantly higher than the VC. The majority of leavers who require additional support with their learning had achieved SCQF Level 5 in numeracy and a minority had achieved SCQF level 6.

##### Cohorts

- As young people move through the senior phase, young people achieve high levels of attainment in literacy. Most young people at S4, by S5 and by S6 over the last five years attain

SCQF level 5 or better which is in line with the VC. Most young people at S4 have been presented for National 5 English in each of the past five years and most achieve a B or better. Several initiatives have helped to maintain high levels of attainment in literacy in the school. These include a focus on reading for pleasure and professional learning for teachers in subject areas across the curriculum to help them to support and assess young people as they develop literacy skills.

- As young people move through the senior phase, they achieve high levels of attainment in numeracy. The maths department should continue to explore the differences between those achieving numeracy through units compared to course awards. Attainment in numeracy at SCQF level 6 by S5 and S6 is significantly higher than the VC in identified years. Most young people at S4 have been presented for a national qualification in mathematics in the past two years and most achieved a pass.

## Attainment over time

### BGE

- The school gathers data about achievement of CfE levels across the whole curriculum. By the end of S3, in most curricular areas outwith literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics almost all young people have achieved CfE third level or better. Teachers in all faculties are using the national benchmarks effectively to help them to make reliable judgements about young people's progress through CfE levels. The high percentage of young people attaining at these levels has been sustained over the last three years.

## Senior Phase

### Improving attainment for all

- Based on average complementary tariff scores for school leavers, the lowest attaining 20% generally perform significantly higher than the VC. The middle 60% have performed significantly much higher and higher than the VC over the last five years. The highest 20% generally perform in line with the VC. The school has maintained high levels of performance over the past five years for the lowest attaining 20% and middle 60%.
- As young people move through S4 to S6, based on average complementary tariff scores, performance of the middle 60% by S5 and S6, and lowest 20% at S4 is significantly higher than the VC in four of the last five years. The lowest 20% by S5 and S6 and the highest 20% at S4, by S5 and S6 perform in line with the VC.
- School staff have worked with officers from the local authority to agree targets for further improving attainment in the senior phase.

### Breadth and Depth

- Senior leaders and Faculty Heads have introduced a range of new courses and awards in the Senior Phase to improve the variety and suitability of young people's learning pathways. These have helped to increase the percentage of young people achieving success at all SCQF Levels. This is especially notable by S6, where more young people have achieved 5 or more passes at SCQF Level 6.
- At S4, with the exception of one year, the majority of young people achieve 6 or more SCQF Level 5 passes. Performance has been significantly higher than the VC for three out of the past five years, and in line for the latest two years. A minority of young people achieve 6 or more SCQF Level 5 passes at A, which is generally in line with the VC. There has been a

decline over the last five years in the percentage of young people attaining top quality passes at SCQF level 5 for one or more to six or more courses.

- By S5, the majority of young people have achieved three or more passes at SCQF Level 6. This has been significantly higher than the VC for three of the past five years. A minority of young people have achieved five or more passes at SCQF Level 6, which is in line with the VC. The percentage of young people achieving 3 or more SCQF Level 6 passes at A has been significantly higher or much higher than the VC for three of the past five years. The school has maintained high levels of performance at this level over the past five years.
- By S6, in all of the past five years the percentage of young people achieving 5 or more passes at SCQF Level 6 has been significantly higher than the VC. The percentage of young people achieving 5 or more SCQF Level 6 passes at A has been significantly higher or much higher than the VC in four of the past five years. The percentage of young people achieving one or more passes at SCQF Level 7 has been significantly higher or much higher than the VC for three of the past five years. The school has maintained high levels of performance at this level over the past five years.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Most young people in S1 and S2 take part in sports, music and a wide range of clubs. Learners talk confidently about their achievements in these activities. A small number of learners lead clubs, including the S3 Sign Language Club and the Languages clubs.
- Achievements are celebrated well on social media, in assemblies and through events such as the Award Ceremony, Sports Awards and Creative & Aesthetic Evening. All students in the BGE receive an end of year certificate celebrating their achievements and their successes are rewarded in various ways.
- School staff have recently launched the South Lanarkshire skills framework. Work on the framework with young people is at an early stage. Pupils confidently display a range of skills but are not yet able to articulate how they use and develop them. Staff should continue with plans to record and track young people's skills development through the My World of Work online application, with a focus on young people understanding their own individual skills progress. Young people appreciate the opportunities provided by the S3 electives and talk confidently about how these link to senior phase pathways. As the new skills framework is embedded, young people should be encouraged to assess how the electives help them to develop key skills for learning, life and work.
- School staff work with a variety of organisations to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people. Partnerships include the Enhanced Personalised Support Mentor, SDS Adviser, DYW Coordinator, the Rotary Club and Youth & Family Community Learning. Partners value this work with the school and feel part of the school community. These very strong partnerships are supporting the development of skills, attributes and knowledge.
- Young people have helped the school to achieve several major awards, including the Gold Sport Scotland award, Scotland's Most Enterprising School, UK's most Entrepreneurial School 2023, Scotland's Enterprising Schools Gold Level Award and the JA Europe Award for young people's entrepreneurship, work readiness and financial health. These successes are due to highly effective partnership working with local businesses. The school has also achieved the Reading School's Gold Award, through which young people are involved in a range of reading-related activities across the community. These awards illustrate young people's opportunities to demonstrate their development as effective contributors, successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.



- School staff track the achievements of young people and identify those who are not engaging in clubs and activities. They have started to target these young people in order to improve their engagement and skills.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The school leadership team has created Principal Teacher Excellence and Equity posts. One of these posts focuses on ensuring that all care experienced young people are supported to attain and achieve to their full potential. Young people who are care experienced are achieving well as a result. The other post focuses on ensuring that young people's opportunities are not limited by the cost of the school day. This helps young people to engage in school activities where they can develop skills and achieve, such as trips and clubs.
- Almost half of the school cohort reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 9 and 10. As these young people leave the school, they are generally performing in line with young people living in the same deciles across Scotland. Leavers in SIMD deciles 4-8 generally perform significantly higher or much higher than young people living in the same deciles across Scotland.
- The percentage of young people in S4 and S5 who stay on at school is very high. Only a small number of young people leave at the end of S4. Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, almost all young people have entered a positive destination on leaving school. The majority go to higher education on leaving school with a minority leaving to enter employment.
- School staff should now move forward with their plans to create a policy to evaluate the strategic direction of their Equity work. This will help to make sure that the use of resources to remove barriers to learning has the greatest impact.

## Other relevant evidence

- The effective leadership of the headteacher and depute headteachers has created a collegiate environment where staff work together effectively to plan and implement improvements aimed at raising attainment and achievement.
- Senior leaders meet with faculty heads to review subject attainment and to provide robust monitoring to evaluate learners' progress. Senior leaders engage in learner walks and provide whole school and faculty feedback on aspects of learning, teaching and assessment. This in turn links directly to professional learning opportunities for staff, which build on areas identified for improvement.
- School staff have successfully trialled a validated self-evaluation (VSE) program for the technologies faculty. This provided a helpful shared understanding of standards and consistency in learning, teaching and assessment for the faculty. The school should continue with the planned programme of increasing the number of VSEs across the school to increase further the quality of classroom experiences for young people.
- Resources are made available for pupils who are at risk of being affected by the cost of the school day. These include water bottles, stationery, toiletries, food hampers and vouchers. School staff actively track young people who are entitled to free school meals to ensure that they use their allowance. 'Home by Home Ec' is an initiative to provide healthy meals for young people to cook with their families.
- The school's Thrive programme offers additional support to those who are finding it difficult to attend school. This is helping to ensure that these young people do not experience gaps in their learning.
- 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. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider. Aspects of good practice were identified in relation to food in schools.

## 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.