

29 April 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Forrester High School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and The City of Edinburgh 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 and teachers should continue to improve the consistency and quality of learning and teaching. Teachers need to understand better national standards across the broad general education (S1 – S3) so that they can plan tasks and activities which are set at the right level of challenge for all young people.

This area for improvement is being successfully addressed.

Senior leaders and staff have recognised and prioritised the need to make improvements to learning and teaching. They worked very well together to explore key areas of class lessons including meeting the needs of learners, structuring lessons, and using positive praise to encourage and support young people. They should now build on this to develop further a culture of learning which is aspirational and ambitious. Young people participate well in a range of motivating classroom tasks and activities. Senior leaders and staff should build on these positive experiences and encourage young people to lead their learning more frequently in classes.

There has been a focus on the review and delivery of the Broad General Education (BGE) since the initial inspection. There is now a clearer focus on the delivery of engaging lessons which motivate young people. Staff have a renewed energy and enthusiasm for their work in this area to ensure that the pace of learning is brisker for young people and that those who require it are appropriately challenged.

Senior leaders and staff work well together to continually improve and refine learning and teaching and the learner experience across the school. They have worked collaboratively and consulted widely to create the 'Forrester in Action' learning and teaching standard. This is now fully embedded in learning and teaching across the school. Young people report that they see a difference in the ways in which most teachers engage with them, providing a recognisable structure in lessons. This is improving their learning experiences.

In almost all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. There are clear links drawn between prior and current learning, including through the use of starter activities. Almost all teachers share the purpose of the lesson at the beginning of a lesson and what young people need to do to be successful. As a next step teachers should work with young people to develop pupil voice in learning and teaching.

Senior leaders should improve their strategic overview of the attainment of young people in S1 – S3. They should use this information with staff to support young people to make the best possible progress with their learning.

This area for improvement is being successfully addressed.

All departments now effectively monitor the progress of young people in S1-3. Senior leaders have also improved approaches to ensure they have an overview of the attainment of all young people.

Middle leaders have worked well together with staff to improve their professional judgements of young people's progress. Staff regularly use these to plan learning, teaching and assessment. All staff have been involved in termly high-quality learning activities to develop reliability and consistency of professional judgements. As a next step senior leaders should now plan similar activities with all associated primary schools across all curricular areas.

Senior leaders and staff need to raise the attainment of young people. They should have higher expectations of all learners and improve the number and quality of National Qualification passes.

This area for improvement has not yet been fully addressed.

Senior leaders and staff are aware of the need to continue to improve attainment across the school. There are clear plans and processes already in place to support this, however the school requires more time to see the full impact of these.

Teachers have maintained high levels of literacy and numeracy performance for leavers in the senior phase. Teachers in English and mathematics have significantly increased the percentage of young people being presented for national qualifications in 2024/25.

Although there have been some improvements in attainment in the senior phase, staff need to continue to improve the attainment of young people across all subject areas. As planned there needs to be a specific focus on improving high quality passes. This remains an area for improvement.

A focus on raising attainment strategy has given staff a very clear direction on improving attainment. Parents value the increase in regular progress updates of their child. They would appreciate more detailed progress reports with consideration given to the appropriate timing of this information.

From session 2024/25 learners at S4 now undertake seven National Qualification courses. This has increased options for young people as they move through the senior phase. This has the potential for young people to attain better. Similarly, additional time allocated to English, maths and a few other curriculum areas as a result of the re-alignment of the school day are designed to raise levels of attainment.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within 18 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 The City of Edinburgh Council that we intend to take.

Carolanne Calderwood
HM Inspector