

# Summarised inspection findings

**Farr High School**

The Highland Council

11 June 2024

## Key contextual information

School Name: Farr High School  
Council: The Highland Council  
SEED number: 5110432  
Roll (2024): 67

Farr High School is a remote and rural school. The school's catchment area covers over 500 square miles in Sutherland. Some young people travel over an hour each way to attend the school.

The headteacher's leadership remit is for Farr High School, Farr Primary School and Nursery Class, Tongue Primary School and Nursery Class and Melvich Primary School and Nursery Class. The Gàidhlig (Gaelic) Medium Education at Tongue Primary School is mothballed. At this time, there is no nursery or secondary available for Gàidhlig Medium and Learner Education.

The senior leadership team for Farr High School comprises a headteacher, a deputy headteacher two principal teachers of management and a principal teacher of additional support needs.

The school has significant challenges in recruiting staff. There are no supply teachers available to the school.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

Exclusions are below the national average.

In September 2022, 9.9 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2022, no pupil lived in 20 per cent most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2022, the school reported that 42 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**very 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 headteacher leads the staff team and young people skilfully to work together effectively to ensure high-quality learning experiences. The staff team creates a productive and positive climate for learning, in which young people are active and engaged. In all lessons, there are very positive relationships between staff and learners. Almost all young people feel respected by staff and their peers. Young people are supportive, polite and kind to each other and adults. They reflect the school values in their interactions with one another and staff.

- Staff and young people have developed a very clear, shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching. Young people have been central to co-developing a framework for learning and teaching with staff. As a result, young people are motivated by their views and big ideas being used to make key improvements to their learning experiences. This is a strength of the improvement work of the school. Teachers regularly reflect and act on young people's ongoing feedback when designing courses, lessons and assessments. Young people feel valued from their active engagement in shaping their learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning clearly. They identify very well how and why young people will know they are successful. Young people's understanding of their progress is strengthened by teachers revisiting lesson outcomes. Most teachers use highly effective questioning techniques to develop learners' understanding. Teachers should continue to build on this skilled practice to promote further higher-order thinking skills across the school.
- Young people benefit from a range of well-planned activities in lessons. They work together to develop thinking and solve complex problems. Teachers support learners very well to develop and demonstrate their understanding.
- Almost all teachers know young people's learning needs very well. They put in place appropriate strategies to support and challenge almost all young people in their learning. As a result, almost all young people engage very confidently in class discussions. Young people are confident, curious and take risks in their learning.
- Young people's use of digital technology to enhance learning is an important strength of the school. Learning through digital technology enables remote lesson delivery, during which young people interact meaningfully. Through digital technology, young people persist and continue with courses and learning despite staffing challenges. In almost all lessons, teachers' use of a range of digital technology is highly effective. As a result, young people engage very well in a wide range of learning approaches.
- Almost all teachers use a very effective range of assessment strategies to gather thorough evidence on young people's progress. Teachers make strong use of formative and summative assessment tools to monitor learners' progress. They adjust plans for learning and assessment to meet almost all young people's learning needs consistently. This is contributing to young people's extremely high levels of engagement in learning. In almost all lessons, young people have regular formal and informal opportunities to engage in peer and self-assessment. Young people describe their progress against targets in almost all subject areas very confidently. Almost all young people talk ably about the key skills they are developing through their learning experiences. Young people benefit from regular, high-quality conversations to review their progress with teachers. They are able to articulate the relevance of what they are learning when teachers effectively link skills to the focus of the lesson.
- In almost all subject areas, young people receive bespoke, high-quality feedback. This takes place in a number of ways, including on digital platforms. Young people access up-to-date feedback easily. Teachers' feedback includes fine detail of what young people are doing well and what they need to do to improve further.
- In almost all subject areas, teachers' plans for courses are very thorough. Plans take account of national Benchmarks, experiences and outcomes in the broad general education (BGE). In the senior phase, a number of teachers develop and mark assessments at a national level. Teachers in each subject department have forged highly effective professional links to develop and moderate plans for learning, teaching and assessment. This is within the school and

across a variety of partnership schools in the council. As a result, teachers have a particularly thorough grasp of national standards and expectations.

- Almost all teachers are confident in their professional judgement of achieving Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in the BGE. Teachers capitalise on the very robust progress data collated in almost all subjects. They make assessment judgements very confidently in the senior phase. Across the school, verification procedures are robust in the senior phase. This is helping to ensure that teachers' judgements are reliable. As a next step, teachers should continue to collaborate and focus on the moderation of plans for learning, teaching and assessment. This will help to ensure that their plans remain supportive and challenging for all learners.
- Teachers have a highly effective overview of learners' progress at departmental level. They have regular staff meetings to discuss individual young people's academic and pastoral needs, and progress. Almost all young people benefit from highly effective interventions to support them be successful in their learning. Teachers create opportunities for young people to have a wide range of useful support on a weekly basis. This includes individual supervised study sessions. Young people are confident that teachers' support is readily accessible.

## 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

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

The number of young people at each stage is relatively very small and varies each session. As a result, generic statements about attainment and progress are made over a five-year period, or similar period. This ensures that no young person is identified.

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

##### S1-3

- Young people attain well in literacy and numeracy. In 2022/23, the school's data shows that young people achieved appropriate CfE levels by the end of S3. This includes young people with an additional support need. Young people add value to their learning as they move from primary school. They develop and apply their skills in literacy well across the curriculum. Young people are focusing further on presenting, debating and explaining their thinking through talking to an unfamiliar audience. Teachers should enable more planned application of numeracy skills across the curriculum.

##### Senior phase

- Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, young people attained well in literacy and numeracy by the time they left school. This is consistently in line with the virtual comparator (VC). Young people with additional support needs attain well.

##### Leavers (literacy)

- Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, most young people leaving school achieved a literacy award at SCQF level 5 or better. Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, the majority of young people left the school with a literacy award at SCQF level 6. This is consistently in line with the VC.

##### Leavers (numeracy)

- Leavers' attainment in numeracy is consistently in line with the VC. Between 2018/19 and 2021/22, the majority of young people achieved a numeracy award at SCQF level 5 or better. Young people's attainment improved at this level in 2022/23. As a result, most young people attained a numeracy award at SCQF level 5 or better. This improvement was realised through the school's new use of 'Applications of Mathematics'. Teachers should continue to focus on how they continue to raise attainment at SCQF level 6.

##### Cohorts

- In both literacy and numeracy, young people in S4, by S5 and by S6, as they move through the school, almost always sustain attainment in line with the VC. This is based on the S4 roll.
- Between 2018/19 and 2022/23 in literacy SCQF levels 5 and 6, the school occasionally performed significantly higher than the VC.

## **Attainment over time**

### **BGE**

- Across S1-3, teachers have detailed data on attainment for their subjects. Young people attain well. Senior leaders should continue to build an overview of young people's progress in the BGE. This would enable teachers' independent use of whole-school data.

### **Senior Phase**

- Senior leaders make effective individual arrangements for young people. This is with the local college, Open University, through online learning and other partners to achieve the best possible outcomes for all learners. Senior leaders should continue to improve progression outcomes in all aspects of technology. Currently, young people's outcomes are diminished in technologies and Gàidhlig. Young people, and their families, request that they are able to attain outcomes for Gàidhlig and Gaelic (Learners) as an important element of their heritage.
- Based on the complementary tariff scores, between 2018/19 and 2022/23, the school performs well. For the lowest-attaining 20% of leavers and middle-attaining 60% of leavers, the school performs consistently in line with the VC. This is also the case for the highest-attaining 20% of leavers, for four of these five years. For all young people with an additional support need, the school performs well.
- Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, as young people at S4, by S5 and by S6 move through the school they perform well. For the lowest-attaining 20%, young people's complementary tariff scores are significantly above the VC in three of the last five years. For the middle-attaining 60% in S4, their complementary tariff score was significantly above the VC in 2019/20 and 2021/22. During the same time period, for the middle-attaining 60% by S5, their complementary tariff score was significantly above the VC in 2020/21. By S6, the middle-attaining 60% and highest-attaining 20% of young people's complementary tariff score was consistently in line with the VC. This is based on the S4 roll.

### **Breadth and depth**

- Overall, at S4, by S5 and by S6 young people perform well. Senior leaders individualise the curriculum to meet young people's needs. Senior leaders should keep under review progression to post-school destinations and how this impacts on planning curriculum pathways. Young people are moving to post-school destinations related to rural employment, local education, as well as higher education.

### **S4**

- Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, the majority of young people at S4 attained five or more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better. In 2019/20, the school achieved significantly much higher than the VC.
- Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, most young people at S4 attained one or more qualifications at SCQF level 5A or better. In 2019/20 and 2022/23, the school achieved significantly much higher than the VC.
- Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, broadly a minority of young people at S4 attained three or more and five or more qualifications at SCQF level 5A or better. (There is one exception in 2020/21 when the majority of young people attained three or more qualifications at SCQF level 5A or better.) The school performs in line with the VC.



## S5

- Broadly, between 2020/21 and 2022/23, the majority of young people by S5 attained one or more qualification at SCQF level 6C or better. In 2021/22, there was an exception when most young people, attained SCQF level 6C or better for one or more qualifications. Broadly during this same time period, a minority of young people attained three or more and five or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C or better.
- Broadly, between 2020/21 and 2022/23, a minority of young people attained one or more and three or more qualifications at SCQF level 6A or better, with the school consistently in line with the VC.

## S6

- In 2023, 50 per cent of the young people who started in S4 in 2020/21 still attended the school for S6. In 2022/23, a majority of young people attained SCQF level 6A or better for one or more qualification. Prior to this, for three years between 2018/19 and 2021/22, a minority of young people attained SCQF level 6A or better for one or more qualification. Broadly, in 2021/22 and 2022/23, a minority of young people attained three or more qualifications. The school performs in line with the VC.
- At SCQF level 7C or better, in four out of five years between 2018/19 and 2022/23, a minority of young people attained one or more qualification at SCQF level 7C or better. The school performs in line with the VC.

## Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people's achievements are celebrated at assemblies, using achievement boards, issuing merits and, more widely, through the school's social media channels. Almost all young people gain accreditation, for example through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Young Stem Leader programme, Mental Health and Wellbeing Awards, Young Applicants in Schools Scheme courses and Saltire Awards.
- Young people gain a useful range of skills from after-school activities. These include sporting clubs, a nail club and a new Polycrub initiative. Young people who may be at risk of missing out are provided with transport to attend clubs. Senior leaders monitor attendance at these clubs. They should continue with their plans to track young people's participation levels in a more detailed way.
- Young people in S3 participate in the Youth Philanthropy Initiative. This enriches their creativity and team working skills. Young people develop skills in decision-making, collaboration and communication from representing the school at Community Council meetings, leading assemblies and having formal positions on the pupil council.
- Senior leaders are at the early stages of developing a skills framework. Staff should develop an overview of all young people's achievements and progression in skills to ensure that no young person is missing out.

## Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders' approaches to equity are an important strength of the school. Staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school. Given the rural locality, staff use their local knowledge very effectively to identify young people impacted by hardship to close gaps in attainment. In 2018/19 and 2022/23, young people residing at Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) five performed significantly higher or much higher than other young people living in similar areas across Scotland.



- A senior postholder's remit includes supporting young people with attendance. This is putting effective individualised interventions in place to help the school make small steps towards improving attendance in line with national expectations. Young people's behaviour across the school is exemplary, with minimal exclusions.
- Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, all young people secured a positive initial destination in four of these years, with almost all doing so in 2019/20.
- The Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) has enabled the school to employ a pupil support assistant for after-school homework clubs. The majority of the targeted young people attend this intervention. The headteacher has worked with a local bus company to improve transport arrangements. This includes for young people attending the school as a placing request. Young people's gaps in progress and attainment are reducing. Senior leaders should give parents and young people a greater role in how PEF is used.
- Senior leaders collaborate with partners, including the Parent Council and The Kyle of Sutherland Trust, to actively reduce barriers young people and families may face. Young people are supported financially to attend school excursions. This helps ensure that no young person is disadvantaged due to their personal circumstances. The staff team overcomes significant challenges from their rural location by using digital technology. All young people have a digital tablet. Young people can access food and other resources from a 'sharing shelf' in the school. Fruit, and other healthy snacks, are available throughout the day.

## Other relevant evidence

- The school needs more support from the local authority with long-term staffing and resources in technologies and Gàidhlig. The teaching of these subjects is limited. Additionally, this impacts on young people's progression pathways and preferred post-school destination. Parents and the young people express their concerns on this. Curriculum offers for Gaelic (Learners) and Gàidhlig should be drawn up to enable some learning of and about Gàidhlig. This would be an important initial step towards sustaining Gàidhlig in Sutherland and meeting the Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017.
- The school library has an appealing atmosphere that is very conducive to reading. Young people use the library regularly and choose texts to be purchased. This includes contemporary texts to meet the interests of a wide range of readers. A member of the community volunteers to maintain the library.

## 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.