

Summarised inspection findings

Dyce Academy

Aberdeen City Council

25 April 2023

Key contextual information

School Name: Dyce Academy
Council: Aberdeen City Council
SEED number: 5243335

Dyce Academy is a six-year comprehensive secondary school located in Dyce, west of Aberdeen City.

Roll as of September 2022 provided by school: 646 learners.
In the last year, the roll has increased more than 10%. This is in part due to a number of families from Ukraine, who have joined Dyce Academy in recent months.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

Exclusions have fallen to being in line with the national average in the last two years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

In February 2022 11 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals. In January 2023 this is now 19 per cent.

In September 2021 2 per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.

In September 2021 the school reported that 45 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

The proportion of young people whose home language is not English has risen to 18 per cent.

The headteacher took up post in December 2022. She is supported by three depute headteachers, an acting depute headteacher and a business manager.

Aberdeen City Music school (ACMS) is based at Dyce Academy. ACMS is a national music school for very able young musicians. It offers a specialist music curriculum within Dyce Academy. There are currently 28 young people who attend the music school.

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

- The school's vision and values are displayed prominently around the school. The recently revised 'learning and teaching policy' is underpinned by these values. Senior leaders recognise that further engagement work with staff and young people is required to embed the vision and values, so that these form the basis of the school's culture, ethos and learning environment. Senior leaders have made positive progress in communicating the new learning and teaching policy across the school community. As planned, they should develop this further so that young people understand more clearly their role as effective learners across the school.
- In most lessons, there is a positive climate for learning. The relationships between almost all staff and young people are positive and respectful. In most lessons, learners would benefit from more opportunities to take responsibility for leading their own learning. In the majority of lessons, the purpose of learning is shared appropriately. In a few lessons, teachers use creative approaches to share what successful learning looks like. They review learning and assess young people's understanding as the lesson progresses and use effective plenaries. In these lessons, young people understand and reflect on their learning well.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers explain planned tasks and activities clearly. The school helpfully provides all young people with laptop devices. In a minority of departments, teachers use these and other digital tools creatively and this supports effectively young people's curiosity, motivation and involvement in their learning. In a few lessons, teachers promote active learning through the creative use of digital technologies. This encourages young people in these classes to take responsibility for their learning.
- Teachers' approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment to meet the needs of all learners are not yet consistent across curriculum areas. This results in a few groups of learners requiring further support to access their learning across all curriculum areas. Approaches to planning suitably challenging learning and teaching are more robust in the senior phase. Overall, across the broad general education (BGE), the level of planned learning experiences for young people is too often below national expectations of where they should be in their learning. As a result, most young people in the BGE do not experience sufficient challenge.
- In the BGE, robust approaches to assessment are established across a few curriculum areas. In these areas, assessment approaches are matched consistently to all learners' needs and support them in demonstrating their progress in learning. Teachers should begin to engage in regular moderation activity to develop a clearer understanding of national expectations of BGE levels. This will help improve the reliability of teachers' professional judgements of young people's levels of attainment and achievement.
- Assessment in the senior phase forms an integral part of young people's learning. In the senior phase, most teachers use a range of assessment strategies effectively to allow learners to

demonstrate their knowledge and understanding across most curriculum areas. Across the senior phase, expectations of young people's attainment and achievement are not consistently high across all curriculum areas. Senior leaders and teachers should ensure that they have consistently high expectations of the standards to be achieved by young people throughout the school.

- In almost all curriculum areas, teachers use established processes to track and monitor young people's progress. These are inconsistent across and within departments. In a few departments, teachers use tracking and monitoring effectively to help them plan learning for young people who are not making sufficient progress towards their expected levels of attainment. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should develop and embed skills development into their assessments and the approaches to monitoring young people's progress.

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

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

BGE

- In 2021/22, most young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level or better in literacy and numeracy and the majority achieved CfE fourth level in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. There is room for greater rigour in the school's approaches to ensuring that assessment information is reliable. Staff should continue to develop approaches to assessing literacy and numeracy in the BGE that fully align to national expectations and standards. There is not yet a whole school overview of young people's attainment in literacy and numeracy over time. A whole school overview will help ensure that skills are built appropriately over time and across all curriculum areas.

Senior Phase

- Staff have a recent focus on ensuring that young people with additional support needs who leave school attain qualifications in literacy and numeracy. The positive impact of this can be seen in 2020/21, where all leavers with additional support needs attained literacy at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 3 or better and almost all at SCQF level 4 or better as a course award. In numeracy, almost all leavers with additional support needs attained numeracy at SCQF level 3, with most attaining at SCQF level 4.

Literacy (leavers)

- Most young people left school with literacy at SCQF level 5 or better between 2016/17 and 2020/21. This was significantly lower than the virtual comparator (VC) in 2016/17 and 2019/20, but otherwise in line. The majority of young people left with literacy at SCQF level 6 between 2018/19 to 2020/21, which is significantly much lower than the VC in 2018/19 and significantly lower than the VC in 2019/20. In 2020/21 this has improved to being in line with the VC. This recent improvement has not been underpinned by focused strategies or policies for improvement.

Numeracy (leavers)

- The majority of young people left school with numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better between 2016/17 and 2020/21. This is significantly much lower than the VC from 2016/17 to 2018/19 and significantly lower than the VC in 2019/20. In 2020/21 this has improved to being in line with the VC. A minority of young people left school with numeracy at SCQF level 6 over the last five years. Attainment at this level in 2016/17, 2018/19 and 2020/21 has been in line with the VC. In 2017/18 and 2019/20 it was significantly much lower than the VC.

Literacy (cohorts)

- At S4, most young people attained literacy at SCQF level 5 or better in 2021/22. This has improved to be in line with the VC in 2020/21 and 2021/22. By S5, as a percentage of the S4 roll, a minority of young people attained literacy at SCQF level 6 from 2017/18 to 2021/22. This is significantly much lower than the VC in three of the last five years and significantly lower than the VC in 2018/19 and 2021/22. By S6, as a percentage of the S4 roll, the majority of young people attain literacy SCQF level 6 from 2019/20 to 2021/22. This is significantly lower than the VC in 2019/20 and 2020/21 and significantly much lower than the VC in three of the last five years. There is no clear pattern of improvement.

Numeracy (cohorts)

- At S4, a majority of young people attained numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better in 2020/21 and 2021/22. This is significantly lower than the VC in three of the last five years and significantly much lower than the VC in 2019/20. It is in line with the VC in 2020/21. By S5, based on the S4 roll, a minority of young people attain numeracy at SCQF level 6 or better from 2017/18 to 2021/22. This has improved from significantly lower than the VC in 2020/21 to in line with the VC in 2021/22. By S6, based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people attain numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better. This is significantly much lower than the VC in three of the last five years, and significantly lower than the VC in 2019/20. It is in line with the VC in 2020/21. A minority of young people attain numeracy at SCQF level 6. This is significantly much lower than the VC in four of the last five years. In 2020/21, this is in line with the VC. There is no clear pattern of improvement.

Attainment over time

BGE

- There is not yet a whole school overview of young people's attainment across the curriculum. Senior leaders and staff do not yet have a sufficient understanding of young people's attainment outcomes. They should continue with plans to ensure there is much more rigorous monitoring and tracking of young people's attainment and progress through the BGE and across the senior phase. This will help provide a clearer whole-school picture of the progress of different cohorts of young people, including an overview of progress for all groups of young people who face additional challenges in their learning. Improved approaches will also help provide better progression for learners across both the BGE and senior phase.

Senior phase

- The attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers, using complementary tariff scores, is significantly lower than the VC in 2019/20, improving to being in line with the VC in 2020/21. Attainment for the middle attaining 60% is in line with the VC in 2020/21, improving from significantly lower or significantly much lower in three out of the last five years. Attainment of the highest attaining 20% of leavers is in line with the VC in 2020/21, improving from being significantly lower than the VC or significantly much lower than the VC in three out of the last five years.
- At S4, attainment for the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% is broadly in line with the VC when compared using complementary tariff points. Attainment of the highest attaining 20% is significantly much higher than the VC in 2021/22 and significantly higher in 2019/20.
- For young people in S5 based on the S4 roll, attainment for the lowest attaining 20% and highest attaining 20% is broadly in line with the VC. Attainment of the middle 60% is in line in 2020/21 and 2021/22, having been significantly lower in two out of the last five years.

- For young people in S6 based on the S4 roll, attainment for the lowest attaining 20% has improved in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 to being in line with the VC, having been significantly much lower than the VC previously. For the middle attaining 60%, attainment has improved in 2020/21 and 2021/22 to be in line with the VC, having previously been significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC. For the highest attaining 20%, attainment is in line with the VC in 2021/22, having previously been significantly lower or much lower than the VC in four out of the last five years.

Breadth and depth

- At S4, most young people attain five or more courses at SCQF level 4 or better. This is in line with the VC. Over the last five years, a minority of young people attained six or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. This is significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC in four of the last five years.
- By S5, the majority of young people attain two or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better. This is broadly in line with the VC. A minority of young people attain four or more courses, which has improved to being in line with the VC in 2020/21 and 2021/22. A few young people attain five or more courses at SCQF level 6C, which is significantly much lower than the VC from 2017/18 to 2021/22.
- By S6, the majority of young people attain two or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better, in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2021/22. A minority of young people attain four or more awards at level 6C or better. This has improved to being in line with the VC in 2020/21 and 2021/22, having previously been significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC in three of the last five years. A minority of young people attain five or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better. This is significantly much lower than the VC from 2017/18 to 2021/22, with the exception of 2020/21, which is significantly lower than the VC. A few young people attain two or more courses at SCQF level 7C or better. Attainment at this level has improved to being in line with the VC in 2021/22, having been significantly much lower in two of the last five years.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people across all stages take part in a variety of activities, such as football, music and an eco-club, as well as the Duke of Edinburgh's award programme. Almost all young people who are part of the support for learners faculty achieve the John Muir Award. A minority of young people are involved in work with the Active Schools programme. A few young people are also undertaking volunteering in connection with achieving Saltire Awards. A few learners have engaged with accreditation such as the Open University. Although young people value their involvement in these activities, they are not yet aware of the key skills such as leadership, research, and resilience that they are developing through participation. Staff should identify and track skills associated with these and other achievements.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff expressed their view that the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) profile does not fully capture recent demographic changes or hidden rural poverty in the school's catchment. This has led to the provision of resources available to all young people such as the 'snack box' or uniform swap shop. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop and raise awareness of this offer to promote equity.
- Senior leaders and staff identify a few individual young people who would benefit from additional support, such as access to the breakfast club, increased Skills Development Scotland input, literacy and numeracy support and mentoring. As staff do not currently monitor and track the progress of identified groups of young people as they move through the school,

they cannot accurately identify attainment gaps across Dyce Academy. This should be a priority area for development so that staff at all levels can support young people with the best understanding of their needs and contexts. The school should continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of supportive interventions, ensuring that they are clearly aligned to accelerating progress in closing poverty-related attainment gaps.

- The school community has welcomed recently the enrolment of a large cohort of young people from Ukraine. All teachers have undergone professional learning on English as an Additional Language strategies. An English for Speakers of Other Languages qualification has been introduced and a pupil support officer employed to support Ukrainian young people. These useful interventions and resources are helping targeted groups of young people to access their learning.
- The average complementary scores for leavers within SIMD 6 (31%) are significantly lower than the national figure. The average complementary scores for leavers in other SIMDs are broadly in line with VC in 2020/21. There is no pattern of improvement over the last five years across the SIMD deciles for leavers.
- Positive destinations have improved from most leavers in 2019/20 to almost all leavers in 2020/21.

Other relevant evidence

- Young people regularly access the school library, where the school and ACMS librarians work together. The school librarian works closely with several departments to provide additional learning opportunities for young people and promotes and highlights reading, research skills and diversity and equality through a range of initiatives.
- Young people at ACMS demonstrate very strong performance skills in music. They practice well individually and in small and large ensembles. They demonstrate strong musical technique and thoughtful expression within a very wide range of music genre. They show high levels of concentration. This is enabling them to improve their overall music achievement at a fast pace. Young people, as a result, demonstrate great confidence and enjoyment as they perform often demanding technical music pieces and sometimes in unfamiliar situations. They engage well with a very wide range of audiences and are at the standard of performing in the Aberdeen Concert Hall. They recognise they are on a journey to become the best musicians they can be. Young people appreciate and make best use of the expert training provided by specialist music staff in the school.
- Young people do not receive their entitlement to a full BGE aligned to the expectations of the Scottish Government's 1+2 languages policy, or to religious and moral education after S4. Senior leaders should consider strategies to address this.

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.