Summarised inspection findings

Langholm Academy

Dumfries and Galloway Council

25 April 2023

Key contextual information

School Name   Langholm Academy
Council: Dumfries and Galloway Council
SEED number: 5948533
Roll: 239

Langholm Academy is part of the Langholm and Canonbie cluster of schools. The headteacher has been in post substantively since 2019

Attendance is generally above the national and local authority average. Both authorised and non-authorised absence is below the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In February 2022. In the Pupil Census of September 2021, 17.4% of pupils were registered for free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average of 17.6%.

In September 2021 70 per cent of pupils lived in the least deprived data zones in Scotland. Just over 66 per cent of young people live in deciles seven and eight, and almost 30 per cent live in deciles four, five and six.

In September 2021, the school reported that 37 percent of pupils had additional support needs.

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	

■ Langholm Academy staff, learners and parents have recently worked together effectively to produce a new set of school values which are beginning to influence aspects of learning and teaching. The ethos of the school is well aligned to these values. Teachers in most lessons regularly refer to values such as kindness, ambition and responsibility. In almost all lessons, relationships between staff and learners are very positive and this creates a calm and productive learning environment.

■ Young people engage well in their learning in the majority of lessons, though at times they can be reluctant to speak out. Teachers interact positively with learners to encourage and support them to talk about their learning. Staff should consider how to further shift the focus in lessons so that learners are less dependent on teacher-led activity. This will help young people to become even more engaged and active as they take more responsibility for their learning.

■ In the majority of lessons, teachers link new learning with the prior learning of young people. This helps young people to understand how their learning is progressing over time. The majority of staff use relevant lesson starters to motivate and engage young people at the

beginning of a lesson. Staff should work together to further share innovative approaches to lesson starters. This may include further increasing the capacity and skills of young people in co-creating and leading this aspect of classroom activity. This will support them to be clear about what they are learning and which skills they are mastering in lessons.

■ In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning at the start of the lesson and show young people how they will be able to demonstrate that they are learning successfully. In a minority of lessons this leads to young people assessing their own progress or collaborating with peers to assess progress. Where this happens, young people welcome the opportunity to take more responsibility for their own progress. Teachers should continue to share their practice and experiences in this area.

■ There is strong practice in how teachers in most lessons relate the learning to an agreed set of employability skills. This helps young people connect what they are working on now with their potential future careers. As a result, young people are developing an understanding of the importance of skills and are able to identify these in their learning. Tracking these skills further will help individual young people to identify areas for their own development.

■ During periods of remote learning staff worked in consultation with learners and parents, to develop digital approaches using an online platform. In a minority of lessons, staff continue to use approaches that allow young people to use digital devices and software to enhance their learning. Building on the good practice developed during the pandemic, staff should consult with young people about how digital approaches could be further developed. At present, teachers' plans for developing digital learning face significant challenges caused by problems with hardware functionality and connectivity which are outwith their control. The local authority is aware of the challenges related to digital provision and agree that they have an important role to play in finding long term solutions to better support the young people in Langholm Academy.

■ In almost all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear and helpful. In a minority of classes, teachers use very skilful questioning to encourage young people to develop their analytical and creative thinking. Commendably, staff have recently begun to work on supporting young people to understand their own learning processes. Further staff training will support this development.

■ Most young people feel well supported by the feedback they receive from their teachers and are clear about their progress and targets. They know what next steps they should take in their learning and are confident that their teachers know them well as learners.

■ Teachers have access to information about specific barriers that individual learners may face. Teachers know their individual pupils very well and are sensitive in giving support to young people with additional needs. In the majority of lessons, teaching and learning has been adapted to suit the needs of individual learners. Classroom teachers should work together, collaborating continuously with support for learning staff, to discuss the effectiveness and impact of a variety of interventions. This will ensure the needs of all learners are fully met. Pupil support assistants (PSAs) provide a valuable resource in supporting young people who require additional support with their learning.

■ Teachers use a variety of methods in the majority of lessons to assess young people's progress. Teachers connect well with staff in other schools to help to make sure that their assessment judgements are accurate, helping them to build their confidence further in assessing learners' progress. Teachers should continue to build on the positive work in this area to support their understanding of national standards. Young people feel supported when

teachers challenge them to achieve as highly as possible. Teachers should build further on this approach by setting high expectations consistently for all young people.

- In class, teachers monitor the learning, engagement and understanding of young people. They are able to adapt the learning to suit the needs of individuals, reinforce aspects of learning as required, and support young people. Faculties and departments employ a range of appropriate tracking systems to track the progress of all young people. This informs the planning of learning based on the needs of young people including appropriate levels of challenge.

- Teachers have detailed plans for individual lessons and for longer periods of time. They use the school and faculty improvement planning process to make changes in courses when necessary. As a next step, young people should be more involved in planning learning. This would give them more opportunities to be leaders of their own learning.

- Teachers have a good understanding of attainment in their own subject areas and are supported well by their Faculty Heads (FHs) as they teach and assess learners. FHs oversee the development of consistency in classroom practice and planning to raise attainment. Important positive changes have been made in this area.

- Young people who are at risk of not attaining as well as expected are identified and supported by teachers. An important next step will be for pupil support staff and faculty-based teachers to work together to mentor young people who have fallen behind in this way. This will allow pupil support staff to have an overview of the attainment of these young people and to evaluate the effectiveness of agreed interventions.

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

- A key focus for the wider leadership team in the last 2 years has been to ensure positive outcomes for young people in literacy and numeracy. As a result, young people in Langholm Academy are progressing well through the Broad General Education (BGE) and the senior phase with a positive picture of attainment in literacy and numeracy.

- Recent data shows that almost all young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level or better in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. By the end of S3, most young people achieved fourth level in listening and talking, reading, and writing and the majority achieved this in numeracy in 2021/22. Over a five-year period, attainment was strongest in 2017/18 in literacy. Teachers across the school have a focus on the use of moderation. They confirm assessment judgements with faculty colleagues and staff from other local schools to ensure their reliability.

- Whole-school tracking enables senior leaders, deputy heads and Faculty heads (FH) to have a strategic overview of the progress of young people across all curricular areas in the BGE. Young people are aware of their progress in the BGE. Staff use a variety of tracking systems to monitor young people's progress which align with subject specialisms. Senior leaders should continue to collaborate with middle leaders and departmental staff to further increase their confidence in the reliability of their CfE data and work towards a robust and consistent tracking and monitoring system across all curricular areas.

Literacy and numeracy (leavers)
- Almost all young people who left the school between sessions 2016/17 and 2020/21 achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better in literacy with the exception of one year. This attainment is generally in line with the Virtual Comparator (VC). At SCQF level 5 or better in literacy, the school performs in line with the VC with the exception of the latest year with the school performing much higher than the VC. There is room for improvement at SCQF level 6. The school has moved from a strong position in 2016/17 and 2017/18 to one where only the minority achieve SCQF level 6 over the last three years. Low pupil uptake in English and Mathematics contributed to this result.

- In numeracy, almost all young people who left Langholm between 2016/17 and 2020/21 achieved SCQF level 4 or better. Level 5 or better was achieved by almost all young people in numeracy in 2020/21. This was significantly much higher than the VC. At SCQF level 5, there is a notable difference between the success young people have in achieving numeracy through units when compared to the percentage who achieve this through a course award. At SCQF level 6, the school performs in line with the VC.

Literacy (cohorts)

■ At S4 almost all young people in 2020/21 and 2021/22 achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy which is in line with the VC. At SCQF level 5 or better, there are signs of improvement with the school performing significantly better than the VC in 2020/21 and 2021/22. By S5, based on the S5 roll, almost all young people achieve SCQF level 5 or better which is in line with the VC. There is headroom for improvement at SCQF level 6, to increase pupil uptake, as this is much lower than the VC in the latest year 2021/22. By S6 based on the S6 roll, performance at SCQF level 5 and 6 is better and in line with the VC.

Numeracy (cohorts)

■ At S4 almost all young people attained numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better from 2019/20 till 2021/22 which is in line with the VC. Performance at SCQF level 5 or better is inconsistent but in the latest year the school is significantly much higher than the VC. By S5, based on the S5 roll, performance at SCQF level 5 in numeracy is significantly much higher than the VC in the latest two years, with almost all attaining at this level. There is headroom for improvement at SCQF level 6 in S5 to improve pupil uptake. This is much lower than the VC in two of the last three years. By S6, as a percentage of the S6 roll, there has been an improvement in attainment at SCQF level 6 or better over the last three years which is in line with the VC.

■ At S4, there remains a notable difference between the success young people have in achieving both literacy and numeracy through units when compared to the percentage who achieve this through a course award.

Attainment over time

■ Attainment for the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% is generally in line with the VC between 2016/17 and 2020/21.

■ Senior leaders are developing the curriculum offer for young people in national qualifications. These opportunities are beginning to provide additional positive routes through SQA certification. These include, for example, psychology, politics, legal studies and rural skills.

■ Senior leaders should continue to develop pathways to enable young people to access a curriculum which is relevant and improves their attainment profile and outcomes. This will support young people to increase their ambition and aspiration and support improved attainment. The quality of passes at National 4, National 5, and higher require improvement in some areas.

■ A recent change provides young people with the opportunity to study seven subjects in the senior phase in S4. This enables young people to have a greater breadth of experience and supports the raising of attainment.

■ In S4, a minority of young people achieved 6 or more qualifications at level 5C or better in 2021/22 which was in line with the VC. By S5, the minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6C or better in 4 or more qualifications over the last 5 years from 2017/18 till 2021/22. There is no consistent trend of improvement at this level.

■ By S6, almost half of young people achieved 4 or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C or better in 2021/22. This is broadly in line with the VC over a 5-year period from 2017/18 with the exception of 2020/21 when this was significantly much lower than the VC. At SCQF level 6A or better, a minority of, young people achieved 4 or more qualifications from 2017/18 till 2020/21. This was in line with the VC for four of these years, and significantly higher than the VC in 2019/2020.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Young people achieve success and demonstrate important skills and achievement through sporting singing and sewing activities. Additionally, the Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir Awards enable young people to experience outdoor activities, team building skills and learn about the environment. Young people are developing confidence and improving physical skills through their performances in the football and rugby clubs

- School staff use tracking to capture young peoples' uptake, participation, and skills development in the range of activities available in Langholm Academy and across the wider community. This tracker also allows the identification of young people not currently engaging with wider achievement activities, enabling senior leaders and staff to encourage, support and mentor young people in developing wider interests and key skills. School staff should continue to develop this tracker to support further expansion of wider achievement and skills linked to future employment.

- School staff have established strong partnerships in the local community to support young people to increase their employability skills. These include collaboration with local charitable trusts, an arts centre, and a youth café. These strong partnerships enable young people to develop a wide range of skills including communication, teamwork and problem solving.

- Achievements are celebrated in the formal annual Awards Ceremony, in addition to regular assemblies. Young people would benefit from the use of the merit system to further reflect and celebrate their successes in wider achievement, both in and beyond school.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders use tracking data on attendance, free school meal entitlement, additional support for learning, care experience and under-performance to identify attainment gaps among young people. This tracking system helps school staff consider the needs of the small rural population which may not be most accurately reflected by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data.

- Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is used well to deploy a learning support assistant and a counsellor. Separately, the school has also funded time for a teacher to function as the PEF lead. This support is leading to improvements in engagement and attendance for identified young people and improvements in their literacy and numeracy skills.

- Senior leaders should ensure that identified young people are targeted and monitored robustly. PEF profiles on individual young people could be used more explicitly across all staff so that the attainment gap, those affected by it and actions to support them are better understood. Clear setting and monitoring of targets will support this work.

- There are limited offers of universal support to promote equity. School leaders should consider how to re-establish the breakfast club. The uniform swap shop should be promoted more prominently to raise awareness, and school leaders should consider ways to review regularly and systematically the need for learning equipment such as laptops. This move to a more public universal offer should help to promote equity and destigmatise access to support.

- Almost all young people move into a positive destination when leaving Langholm Academy. This is in line with the VC.

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.