

Summarised inspection findings

Invergordon Academy

The Highland Council

21 March 2023

Key contextual information

School Name: Invergordon Academy
Council: The Highland Council
SEED number: 5119634
Roll: 335 (February 2023)

Invergordon Academy is located in Invergordon, Ross and Cromarty. The school links with four associated primary schools. These are Park Primary School, South Lodge Primary School, Milton Primary School, and Newmore Primary School. In September 2021, 43% of young people lived in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In February 2022, 27.1% of young people were registered for free school meals.

The school has an acting headteacher who has been in post for approximately three weeks. Previously, he was a substantive deputy headteacher in the school. The former headteacher has been seconded very recently to another secondary school in The Highland Council. The acting headteacher is supported by a deputy headteacher. There is a current deputy headteacher vacancy in the senior management team.

In September 2021, the school reported that 70.2% of young people had additional support needs. This is almost 20% higher than the percentage of young people reported as having additional support needs in the school in September 2017. It is also 20.3% higher than the percentage of young people reported as having additional support needs in the local authority in 2021.

Attendance is generally below the national average. For 2021/22 attendance was 86.7%. For 2022/23 to date, attendance is 85.1%. Exclusions were in line with the national average in 2020/21 at 30.5 per 1000, although they increased in 2021/22 to 61.8 per 1000. Currently, this session, exclusions are 6.0 per 1000.

Recruitment challenges are constraining young people's curriculum; their experiences in learning, teaching, and assessment; and their outcomes in a few curriculum areas. Senior leaders continue to try to mitigate these challenges through a variety of strategies. These include using the Highland Virtual Academy to enhance the school's curriculum offer. They also include young people working closely with partners, including the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) North Highland and Inverness campuses.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

- In most lessons, positive relationships between staff and young people support a calm and mutually respectful learning environment. Young people are well known by most staff. Most young people are articulate and demonstrate confidence when interacting with others. A majority of young people enjoy their learning.
- In a majority of classes, young people are not active participants in their learning. Most lessons are directed to the whole class and are overly teacher led and task driven. This does not support learners' engagement and results in young people being too passive. Young people would benefit from more opportunities to lead aspects of their learning and demonstrate independent learning skills.
- Young people engage well in tasks that require them to discuss or debate topics. When young people have opportunities to work in pairs or groups, they interact well and achieve success. Too often, young people are asked to complete low-level tasks, such as note taking. Learners' experiences would be enhanced by further opportunities to work collaboratively and to use their critical thinking skills more regularly.
- In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and offer clear explanations and instructions. A majority of teachers use well-established classroom routines, such as starter tasks to focus learners. Where routines are not well established, a few young people disrupt the learning environment at times. Most teachers could make better use of plenaries to review the learning and check if young people have been successful in this. In almost all lessons, young people would benefit from increased pace and challenge.
- In most classes, teachers use questioning appropriately to check young people's understanding. However, in the majority of classes, teachers need to use questioning more effectively to encourage young people to think deeply about their learning.
- A few teachers use creative teaching approaches to motivate learners, including using interactive boards well. This practice should be shared more widely to support improvement. Across the school, teachers should develop young people's creative use of digital technologies more consistently in classes. This has the potential to provide young people with different contexts of learning to apply a variety of new skills.
- Senior leaders have correctly identified inconsistencies in the quality of learning and teaching. They are supporting a teacher-led group to develop appropriate plans to address the inconsistencies. The introduction of a teaching and learning policy is an important next step for all staff in supporting a shared understanding of what will be expected in relation to high-quality learning and teaching. The views of young people and the wider school community will be crucial to this work. Teachers have formed learning trios and attend regular collegiate

sessions. Whilst these activities are beginning to support the sharing of good practice, there is a need to develop this work further to improve learners' experiences.

- In most classes, young people's needs are not being met well enough. There is a need for teachers to consider fully how they plan and provide tasks and activities that take account of young people's additional support needs. Strategies to support young people who have additional needs are not being implemented consistently across the school. Too often, they experience learning that does not address their specific barriers to learning. Middle leaders and teachers should consider how they monitor the progress in learning of young people with additional learning needs to inform appropriate interventions to support them effectively.
- Ongoing staffing issues across the school are diminishing the quality of some learners' experiences significantly. In a few subject areas, young people are not being taught regularly by subject specialist teachers. These young people demonstrate minimal progress in these subject areas. Senior leaders have adapted the curriculum, removing certain subjects due to staffing issues. This has impacted on young people's curriculum entitlements. A few young people have accessed learning through the Highland Virtual Academy, distance learning courses, and through college partners. The local authority and school should continue to identify and implement creative solutions to address these issues. This will require senior leaders to continue to work closely with staff from the local authority to ensure all young people receive an appropriate, progressive and motivating education across the curriculum.
- Staff are aware of the need to use a wider range of assessments to inform their planning for learning, teaching and assessment. Whilst a few teachers use peer-assessment and self-assessment to monitor young people's progress, most teachers use summative assessments too often. Teachers would benefit from the increased sharing of effective practice in relation to an appropriate range of assessment strategies.
- Teachers across curriculum areas are engaging in a few moderation activities, although more teachers have plans to take part in forthcoming local authority moderation activities. A few teachers are developing links with colleagues from the associated primary schools to moderate teaching materials and assessments. This work is at an early stage and should be extended to include colleagues from all the associated primary schools. Increased moderation activities will enable all teachers to develop a better understanding of standards, make more reliable assessment decisions and develop increased consistency in the quality of their work.
- Departments across the school use a variety of tracking and monitoring systems of varying quality. Senior leaders are about to introduce a more comprehensive whole-school tracking and monitoring system. This will include more suitable tracking and monitoring processes for use within curriculum areas. This will help senior leaders and staff across the school to develop a better understanding of learners' progress from S1 to S6. It will also help them to provide effective interventions to meet young people's needs more consistently.
- Young people in the broad, general education (BGE) receive three reports per session from their class teachers, with young people in the senior phase receiving two. These reports identify appropriately young people's progress in learning and their targets for future learning. Young people complete an additional report, in which they reflect on their own progress and set their own targets. They use feedback from teachers to inform their targets. This feedback is often insufficient to help young people understand their next steps in learning. This impacts on the quality of targets that they set. All staff should take steps to review the ways that feedback is shared with learners. The majority of parents understand how to support their young person's learning at home. A few parents would appreciate more detailed advice to help them support their child'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

satisfactory

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 2022, by the end of S3, the majority of young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level or better in literacy. The majority of young people achieved this level or better in numeracy. In 2021/22, by the end of S3, a minority of young people achieved CfE fourth level or better in literacy. A minority of young people achieved this level or better in numeracy.
- Most staff are at an early stage of developing a consistent understanding of BGE levels in literacy and numeracy. As a result, inspectors are not confident in the reliability of all the school's data.

Senior Phase

Literacy (leavers)

- Almost all young people left school with Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better in literacy in most years from 2016/17 to 2020/21, in line with the virtual comparator (VC). The majority of young people left school with SCQF level 5 or better in literacy over this time, with a few exceptions. The percentages of young people leaving with this qualification have moved from being in line with the VC from 2016/17 to 2018/19 to being significantly lower and significantly much lower than the VC in 2019/20 and 2020/21. A minority of young people left school with SCQF level 6 in literacy over the five years. The percentage attaining this level has declined from being in line with the VC from 2017/18 to 2019/20 to being significantly much lower than the VC in 2020/21.

Numeracy (leavers)

- Most young people left school with SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy from 2016/17 to 2018/19, with almost all leaving with this qualification in 2019/20 and 2020-21. This was significantly much higher than the VC in 2019/20. The majority of young people left school with SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in these five years, in line with the VC. A minority of young people left school with SCQF level 6 in numeracy during this time-period.
- Senior leaders and staff are becoming increasingly systematic in targeting young people who plan to leave school at the end of the summer term. They are providing increased support to improve all leavers' opportunities of attaining literacy and numeracy qualifications. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to review the curriculum to incorporate additional time for groups of young people to attain literacy and numeracy qualifications. They should also continue to consider how the curriculum can maximise young people's opportunities for

success, for example offering qualifications such as applications of mathematics as appropriate.

Literacy (cohorts)

- In S4, the majority of young people attain SCQF level 5 or better in most years between 2017/18 and 2021/22. The percentages of young people attaining this level are broadly in line with the VC in three of these years, not including the latest year. By S5 (based on the S5 roll), the percentages gaining SCQF level 5 or better have declined from being in line with the VC in 2017/18 and 2018/19 to being significantly much lower than the VC in the last three years. Senior leaders identify staffing challenges as an important factor contributing to this decline. Otherwise, in S4, by S5 (based on the S5 roll) and by S6 (based on the S6 roll), the school's performance is generally in line within the VC over the same time-period, with a few exceptions.

Numeracy (cohorts)

- In S4, by S5 (based on the S5 roll) and by S6 (based on the S6 roll), the school's performance is broadly in line with the VC from 2017/18 to 2021/22, with a few exceptions. In S4, a minority of young people attain SCQF level 5 or better in most of these years. By S5 (based on the S5 roll), the majority of young people attain this level in most of these years. In S4 and by S5 (based on the S5 roll), there has been a decline in the percentages of young people attaining SCQF level 5 or better over the five-year period. By S6 (based on the S6 roll), the percentages of young people leaving school with SCQF level 6 in numeracy are broadly in line with the VC in most of these years.

Attainment over time

- Staff are engaging in regular tracking and monitoring across the senior phase. A school tracking and monitoring system provides staff with relevant information regarding different groups of young people. Staff are using this information to identify groups of learners who require targeted support and to plan for their next steps in their learning.
- Senior leaders have correctly identified the need for a more cohesive tracking and monitoring system that should help to meet the needs of all young people from S1 to S6 more effectively. A suitable system has been identified and plans are in place to introduce this.

BGE

- Whilst senior leaders can demonstrate young people's attainment over time in literacy and numeracy, they are not yet able to do so across all curriculum areas. Improved moderation processes as well as improved tracking and monitoring should help senior leaders and staff to be able to demonstrate young people's attainment with increased rigour.

Senior Phase

- When compared using average complementary tariff points, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60%, and highest attaining 20% of young people is broadly in line with the VC from 2016/17 to 2020/21. There are a few exceptions over this time-period, not including the latest year.
- When compared using average complementary tariff points, in S4, from 2017/18 to 2020/21, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60%, and highest attaining 20% of young people is broadly in line with the VC. The attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people shows improvements over the five years. This reflects targeted work that certain young people have engaged in with staff and partners. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people declined in the latest year to being significantly lower than the VC.

- During this same time-period, by S5 (based on the S5 roll), the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60%, and highest attaining 20% of young people is broadly in line with the VC in most years. By S6 (based on the S6 roll), there is a similar pattern of attainment.
- In S4, at SCQF level 4 or better, a minority of young people gain six or more qualifications in most years from 2017/18 to 2021/22, although the school is performing significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC in the last four years. At SCQF level 5C or better, the percentages of young people gaining two or more to six or more qualifications show some decline over the five years. They have moved to being significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC in the latest year. Senior leaders and staff need to focus on improving the quantity and quality of young people's qualifications at these levels. At SCQF level 5A or better, the percentages of young people gaining two or more to six or more qualifications are broadly in line with the VC over the same time-period.
- By S5 (based on the S5 roll), at SCQF level 4 or better, the percentages of young people gaining one or more to six or more qualifications are broadly in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2021/22, with a few exceptions. At SCQF level 5C or better, a majority of young people gained four or more qualifications from 2017/18 to 2021/22. The percentages of young people gaining one or more to six or more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better are broadly in line with the VC from 2017/18 to 2021/22. This is also true in relation to the percentages of young people gaining SCQF level 5A or better. At SCQF level 6C or better and SCQF level 6A or better, the percentages of young people gaining one or more to four or more qualifications are broadly in line with the VC over the five-year period.
- By S6 (based on the S6 roll), at SCQF level 5C or better, the school performs broadly in line with the VC from 2017/18 to 2021/22, with a few exceptions. It performs broadly in line with the VC at SCQF level 5A or better, SCQF level 6C or better, and SCQF level 6A or better over the same time-period. At SCQF level 6C or better, a minority of young people usually gain three or more qualifications. At SCQF level 7C or better, and SCQF level 7A or better, the school performs broadly in line with the VC from 2017/18 to 2021/22.
- Senior leaders and staff should continue to review the school's presentation policy to ensure this is sufficiently aspirational for young people. It should take good account of the school's current context and young people's ongoing needs.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- The school offers a variety of opportunities, including a wide-ranging programme of activities for young people to achieve. This includes a debate club, a drama club and several sports teams. Participation rates are high and young people speak very positively about the range of skills and improved confidence they gain.
- A group of young people demonstrate their leadership skills and improved self-confidence through the Sports Leader programme and Saltire Awards. A few young people are also working towards achieving the John Muir Award through school and community-based activities that enhance their citizenship skills. A few young people access the Youth Achievement Award through the school's partnership with North Highland College.
- Young people's successes are celebrated well through prize-giving events, 'Stars of the Week' and 'Pupil Shout-outs'. The school publicises successes regularly outwith the school using social media and in the school on achievement boards. Young people are pleased that staff

have plans underway to reintroduce rewards trips. Young people feel valued and recognised for their achievements which helps to build further their confidence and aspirations.

- Staff are at an early stage of tracking young people's achievements and monitoring their skills progression. The new tracking platform should assist with this. It should also allow young people and staff to reflect further on the skills and qualities being developed through their achievements. Staff should continue to re-introduce Duke of Edinburgh Awards and the Youth Philanthropy Initiative programme to help encourage young people's citizenship and skills development. They should also consider seeking accreditation for leadership roles and initiatives undertaken by young people across the senior school.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and almost all staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural, and economic context of the school. This is helping them to provide caring and targeted support for individual young people and their families. This includes the provision of items of school dress and the removal of financial barriers associated with school activities, which allow more young people to participate.
- Young people are supported by specialist staff funded from Pupil Equity Funding and Strategic Equity Funding. For example, two child support workers who focus on young people where disadvantage is a barrier to achieving and attaining their potential. This includes learners who face additional challenges, such as young carers, care-experienced young people, and those with additional support needs. This support is helping these targeted groups to remain engaged with school life.
- Young people hoping to progress to university are supported through the ASPIRE North programme. A range of partners, including Skills Development Scotland, and a Developing the Young Workforce Officer support the school well by providing development opportunities for school leavers. Services offered to learners include curriculum vitae (CV) writing support and a college application day.
- Almost all young people leaving school from 2016-17 to 2020-21 moved to a positive destination, with the exceptions of 2018-19 and 2020-21 when it was all young people. These very positive figures are well-supported by partner and staff's effective planning for transitions from school. Generally, the majority of young people left school for further or higher education.

Other relevant evidence

- The local authority submitted self-evaluation 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. The HNI also discussed the effectiveness of whole school health promotion duties as far as they relate to food and nutrition. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

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.