

1 October 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Arbroath Academy. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Angus 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. 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.

**Area 1 for improvement: teachers need to develop a shared understanding of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment. This includes the need to plan learning which offers greater levels of challenge to meet the needs and aspirations of young people.**

Staff have worked well together to develop a stronger culture of learning. They have undertaken professional learning and agreed a common approach to providing high-quality learning and teaching across the school. As a result, young people's learning experiences in the classroom are improving. In most classes, young people understand the purpose of their learning better. They benefit from an increasing range of motivating and engaging experiences and greater opportunities to work with peers. Young people are increasingly offered opportunities to learn actively in a majority of lessons.

Staff should continue to develop their practice so that all young people experience consistently high-quality learning and teaching. Staff need to strengthen their approaches to meeting the needs of all young people so that they make the most appropriate progress in their learning. Staff should also improve their feedback to young people so that all learners know their strengths and next steps in learning.

**Area 2 for improvement: middle leaders and teachers, supported by senior leaders, need to gather and use data on young people's progress more effectively to inform a range of strategies to raise attainment. This includes having a school overview of how well all young people are progressing and attaining from S1-S3.**

Teachers use a greater range of assessment information to make more reliable judgments about young people's progress. Middle leaders meet with senior leaders regularly to review assessment data. They use this information more effectively to target support for young people who may be at risk of not attaining expected levels. Senior and middle leaders should continue to increase the reliability of their judgments about young people's progress. They should continue to ensure data about young people's progress is used effectively to identify all learners who may require additional input to attain well. They also need to use data to evaluate how well their interventions are supporting young people to make appropriate progress in their learning.

Senior leaders have created a helpful whole school overview of young people's attainment. They should continue to develop this to ensure that young people make the best possible progress across all curricular areas.

**Area 3 for improvement: senior leaders and staff need to continue to develop an aspirational culture across the school to raise attainment at all levels.**

Senior leaders and staff have developed a stronger culture of aspiration across the school. They have strengthened processes for young people to choose appropriate courses so that they follow more aspirational pathways through the senior phase. Young people's attainment is beginning to improve. This is most notable in literacy and numeracy attainment from S1 to S3 and for a few groups in S4 to S6. There are improvements in the attainment of young people in S4 and S5. These learners are achieving a greater number of passes across their subjects. Staff also measure more carefully young people's participation in activities to achieve beyond the classroom. They are using this information well to support a greater number of young people to achieve.

Staff should continue to increase their expectations of young people to attain well across the school in line with their abilities. Staff need to sustain progress made this session in young people's attainment. An important next step is to reverse recent declines in a few areas of young people's attainment in S4 to S6. Staff need to improve aspects of young people's attainment in literacy and numeracy. They need to improve the attainment of the lowest attaining learners in S4 and highest attaining group of young people in S6. They also need to ensure that young people attain the highest quality of passes from the broadest range of courses as appropriate to their ability. Senior leaders and staff need to ensure that young people who require additional support with their learning are supported to make appropriate progress and attain well.

### What happens next?

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

Patricia Cameron  
HM Inspector