Summarised inspection findings

Abercorn Secondary School

Glasgow City Council

4 February 2025

Key contextual information

School Name: Abercorn Secondary School
Council: Glasgow City Council
SEED number: 8448647
Roll (provided by school): 137

Attendance is generally below the national average. Attendance dropped from 91.4% pre-pandemic to 81.1% following the pandemic. The rate has subsequently increased year on year to the current rate of 87.7%.

Exclusions are below the national average. The rate of exclusion has been decreasing from 82 per 1000 pupils in session 2019/20 to the current rate of 14.3 per 1000 pupils.

In September 2024,57.6 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2024,67.1 per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2024, the school reported that 100 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

1.3 Leadership of change	good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

■ developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
■ strategic planning for continuous improvement
■ implementing improvement and change

■ The headteacher and leadership team provide strong values-led leadership. All staff are committed to providing young people with opportunities to learn in a nurturing school environment. This supports the culture of care and kindness across the school.

■ Young people recognised recently that the school's vision, values and aims were no longer relevant. They were not well known nor spoken about throughout the school. Staff supported young people effectively to develop new values, which were more meaningful for the school's current context. Young people drove this change, guided carefully by staff. All staff, parents and partners were consulted on the ongoing development of the school's vision, values and aims. The school's values of kind, heart and hope underpin the school's work well. These reflect the supportive caring culture in the school. Staff now need to embed the aims more fully in the life of the school. They should develop a shared understanding of the importance of the school's aims and what they mean for each young person. Staff should now consider how the vision, values and aims support improved aspirations for young people's learning. This should include placing a greater emphasis on raising attainment for all young people.

■ Staff have a good understanding of the context of the school. Staff are aware of the unique challenges which the majority of young people, who live within areas of socio-economic deprivation, face. They take good account of the impact these challenges have on families. They help families regularly access support from external agencies who can their young person beyond school. Staff ensured the school stayed open during the pandemic. This supported young people and their parents to maintain contact with the school. Parents speak highly of the support school staff provide. The impact of this is evident in the strong sense of community across the school.

■ As a result of several challenges in staffing over the last few years the leadership team's ability to take forward important improvement priorities has been reduced. There is a need for the school to increase the pace of change in taking forward improvement priorities. For example, in developing the curriculum further to better meet young people's needs.

■ Senior leaders encourage staff to identify their interests and skills to help improve the school. They support staff to take on board leadership roles in developing these areas. Young people are encouraged to point out where the school could improve. This often leads to staff supporting them to run a club or activity, which young people enjoy. Senior leaders need to develop a more strategic approach to how they develop leadership across the school. They should consider how staff's leadership roles link more closely to the school's improvement priorities. This should include developing a strategic overview of how staff will improve the work of the school. This will support staff more effectively to take forward areas for improvement.

- Staff engage willingly in professional dialogue. They discuss their practice regularly with each other. They use these discussions to help identify what they could do differently in each lesson to engage young people more effectively in their learning. They are keen to attend and share professional learning. Senior leaders support this well by ensuring staff have access to a range of relevant professional learning. In a few instances, senior leaders and other staff have supported colleagues to undertake learning leading to additional qualifications. This has supported these staff to move on to new posts with greater responsibility. Senior leaders should consider how pupil support assistants access professional learning relevant to their role. Teachers now need to embed professional learning more effectively into practice throughout the school. Senior leaders should consider approaches to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of professional learning in relation to the changing profile of learners to support improvement in outcomes for young people.

- The school has previously used pupil equity funding (PEF) to improve the school playpark and playground equipment. This provides a space for young people to play and take time to regulate if they become dysregulated. Senior leaders use PEF to fund a developing the young workforce (DYW) co-ordinator and Children's 1st family worker. The DYW co-ordinator post supports young people to develop their awareness of the world of work and to progress too positive post-school destinations. The family worker supports young people well to improve their attendance.

- Staff are involved fully in reviewing the work of the school throughout the school year. The school's quality assurance calendar details activities they undertake to improve the work of the school. This work informs the areas for development captured within the school improvement plan (SIP). The SIP details appropriate long term and annual targets. Progress against identified targets is reviewed regularly throughout the school year. The school should consider how improvement targets make greater reference to raising attainment. Senior leaders should now seek to involve parents and partners more fully in identifying areas for development. The pupil council are particularly active in putting forward young people's ideas for improving the school. They helped identify spaces within the school, which help improve young people's wellbeing.

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

◼ All staff develop and maintain positive relationships with young people. This helps most young people engage effectively in their learning. Staff are visible throughout the school and during class transitions. This supports almost all young people to move around the school calmly. Young people are respectful to each other. They show care and consideration to their classmates. This supports the nurturing and caring ethos present across the school. The school has recently established a new vision and values. These are beginning to support staff, parents and young people to have a more explicit understanding of the school's aspirations for all young people.

◼ Most young people's learning is appropriately paced and suitably challenging. However, there is an over-reliance on whole-class instruction, which results in a minority of young people becoming passive in lessons. This limits their opportunities to take more ownership of their own learning. Young people are provided with a range of opportunities to lead their own learning through their involvement in wider achievement awards, the pupil council and assemblies. Young people enjoy these activities. They support them to play an important role in the life of the school. Young people are not always clear on the purpose of their learning. Teachers should develop their use of learning intentions and success criteria further to help young people understand what they are learning and why. Teachers have recently introduced new classroom routines in a few classes. Early indications show these are helping to increase a few young people's levels of participation and engagement.

◼ In the broad general education (BGE), a minority of young people require adaptations to help them access their learning. A few teachers use visual symbols and signing to support their communication. This helps those young people requiring these supports to engage better in their learning. Senior leaders should build on this work to develop a consistent approach in the use of communication supports across the school. This has the potential to improve young people's engagement in their learning further. Teachers should continue to review learning activities to ensure they provide sufficient support and differentiation taking better account of young people's needs, interests and aspirations. Young people's learning would be enriched and supported by more effective use of digital technologies.

◼ In almost all lessons, teachers use questioning well to check for young people's understanding. They also use questioning regularly to check on young people's wellbeing. In the senior phase, there is a need to broaden this approach by incorporating a wider range of questioning to meet the needs of all learners more effectively. Teachers use praise well to motivate young people. In a minority of lessons young people are provided with clear next steps and areas for improvement. Teachers' verbal feedback does not always help young people know how to improve their learning. Teachers should develop their use of feedback further to help young

people know how well they have completed a task and their next steps in learning.

- Teachers recently reviewed the school's physical environment and have made changes to classroom layout as a result. These changes support young people to engage more meaningfully in their learning. The development of flexible learning spaces, outside space and the introduction of a symbolised approach to support helps young people to feel more comfortable in the school. This helps young people to regulate their emotions better in school.

- A range of documents detailing each young person's individual abilities and needs provide staff with information regarding each young person's barriers to learning and wellbeing. This information helps staff to understand any potential triggers which could cause young people to become anxious or distressed. This supports them to identify and provide appropriate supports, which help the majority of young people make good progress in their learning.

- Teachers plan over the long and medium term to meet the needs of individuals in all curricular areas. Curriculum maps support planning and ensure that young people in the BGE experience a breadth of learning across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. Assessment and learning plans give greater detail and allow increased focus, differentiation and personalisation. From these, extensive curriculum plans are prepared for all young people and shared with parents. Whilst these give good detail of learning, the staff should consider streamlining these to work more coherently with other planning documents.

- Teachers monitor and evaluate planned learning at key checkpoints throughout the school year. Young people are involved in learning conversations at these key points. This helps them to discuss what they are learning. In most classes, there is a focus on developing young people's thinking skills. A few young people name the skills they are developing well. Teachers use visual cues well to support discussion with young people around identified learning outcomes. Teachers should continue to look at ways to differentiate and break down the skills being developed across the curriculum to improve young people's understanding of what they are learning.

- Teachers are developing their confidence in using a range of assessment approaches to identify how well young people are progressing in their learning. They use a variety of approaches and a mix of formative and summative assessments throughout planning blocks. This is personalised to the individual learners involved. Teachers have engaged in useful moderation activities with colleagues across the local authority. This is helping them to develop their confidence in making professional judgements of young people's attainment.

- Staff are developing their use of tracking and monitoring approaches to evaluate young people's progress. This provides them with a holistic overview of how well young people are making progress across the curriculum. Senior leaders need to continue to support teachers to further develop their skills and confidence in tracking and monitoring young people's progress, particularly for more complex learners. Consideration should be given to how the milestones: continuums of engagement can support this work.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ The pupil council consulted effectively with stakeholders across the school community when updating the school's vision and values. The school's vision underpins the school curriculum well. Young people in the pupil council suggest activities for the 'Friday afternoon achievement' sessions. Activities such as film making, board games, walking group, dance, cycling and massage, support young people to develop their wellbeing.

■ Partners support the school well to enhance the curriculum through a range of personal achievement activities. A range of pathways ensure all young people receive their entitlement to a BGE. These ensure young people learn across all curricular areas including outdoor learning opportunities and physical education, with a focus on skills for learning, life and work. Curricular pathways support teachers to plan learning, which build progressively on what young people can already do.

■ In the senior phase, almost all learners are able to access a varied and progressive curriculum across a wide range of subjects. There are significant opportunities to achieve across a diverse range of national qualifications and awards. A focus on personalised wider achievement and developing skills for learning, life and work are a strong feature of the curriculum. Young people build skills and achieve accreditation through a range of experiences and awards at all levels. This includes Jass, Duke of Edinburgh, Employability, Sports Leader and the newly introduced Adult Learning and Transition award. Young people spend time in the community developing skills and meeting with peers from other schools on trips and outings. Personal achievements include a few young people taking part in an international ski trip with young people from a neighbouring school.

■ Senior leaders and staff have expanded the number of curriculum pathways to support the needs of more diverse learners. The school should consider simplifying their curricular pathways' structure to better meet the needs of all learners. Staff should develop the curriculum rationale further with an increased focus on developing young people's skills more purposefully.

■ Young people who need a more personalised approach to learning benefit from recent timetable changes. They now spend time in core classes, where they develop skills to allow them to engage in other curricular areas. This is beginning to impact positively on young people's engagement in their learning. Staff should now consider how this approach could be expanded to involve all learners who would benefit from fewer transitions.

■ Partners are involved in supporting bespoke, individualised timetables for a few young people. This supports these young people effectively to attend school and engage in their learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Parents who spoke with inspectors expressed very positive views about the school. They recognised staff's commitment to treating their child with dignity and respect. Almost all parents report that their child feels safe, happy, and enjoys attending school. They highlight the positive impact of the relationship their child has with school staff. They are clear that the variety of opportunities young people have at the school are improving their child's learning and wellbeing. Parents appreciate the welcoming and friendly atmosphere and benefit from a variety of effective communications, including newsletters, surveys, and event updates. They feel well connected to staff providing pastoral support. Events such as parent evenings, transitions, review meetings, and end-of-term awards help strengthen families' connection with the school.

■ Parents appreciate the valuable, individualised support staff provide for their child in to improve their life skills. This helps young people to develop their independent living skills. A minority of parents would like to see more frequent updates on their child's progress. They would welcome additional strategies to support their child's needs at home and more regular updates on learning and achievements. Senior leaders and staff should continue to explore how best they can share young people's learning and wellbeing with parents.

■ Currently, the school does not have a Parent Council. The school should continue with plans to reinstate the Parent Council to increase parental involvement in decision-making processes, including school improvement priorities.

2.1 Safeguarding

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- ■ wellbeing
- ■ fulfilment of statutory duties
- ■ inclusion and equality

■ Across the school there is a strong sense of community where young people feel nurtured, included and understood as unique individuals. Young people feel well supported by staff who know them as individuals. Staff understand well each young person's strengths and the barriers they face in their learning and wellbeing. Relationships between staff and young people, and between young people are a positive strength of the school. Almost all staff and young people consistently demonstrate the values of kindness and compassion at all times. This leads to young people feeling safe and having a sense of being valued members of the school community. Almost all young people behave well at all times. They are respectful of each other and their school community. In the few instances where young people become distressed, staff work well to help them regulate and reengage in their learning.

■ Staff involved young people effectively in redesigning spaces throughout the school. Young people now have more choice in the spaces they can use if they feel overwhelmed or anxious. They use these spaces well, resulting in a reduction of incidents where young people become distressed or dysregulated. They describe how this helps them to re-engage in their learning more easily. Staff have introduced a base class model to support a few learners who require increased support in their wellbeing, care and learning. Early indications show this is supporting young people's needs more effectively. A few young people use individual workspaces and receive enhanced support as they move around the school. This is helping them to engage better in their learning.

■ Senior leaders and staff should now monitor the time a minority of young people spend in these spaces and the support and guidance that is required more closely. Risk assessments should be clearer to ensure staff have a shared and clear understanding as to what and how they should provide the necessary support. This will help them evaluate the effectiveness of strategies for re-engaging these young people in their learning and support their wellbeing.

■ The personal and social education program in the BGE addresses key themes impacting young people with additional support needs. This helps young people well to develop their knowledge and understanding of important issues which may affect them. For example, they are learning how to stay safe, develop life skills, become more independent, make healthy choices and express themselves. In the senior phase, almost all young people gain additional accreditation through wellbeing and personal development awards. Young people receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education.

■ Almost all young people use the outdoor space well as part of planned learning and leisure time. Young people recognise the benefits of being outdoors. They can talk about how engaging in more active outdoor activities supports their physical wellbeing and contributes

well to keeping them healthy. As a result of time spent outdoors, most young people have developed their skills in playing cooperative games, and most can ride bikes and scooters with confidence.

- The school has effective arrangements in place at points of transition. In the BGE, staff engage young people and families well in developing a detailed understanding of each young person's unique skills and interests. Parents and young people value this work and feel included and understood. This leads to most young people feeling supported and confident as they settle quickly into the routine and structures of the school. In the senior phase, the school engages very effectively with external partners. They hold information events for parents about important matters such as guardianship and services that can provide support after their child has left school. Staff build well on young people's interests and find ways to match their interests and skills into pathways towards positive destinations. Young people feel this prepares them well for leaving school and feel confident about trying new things and meeting new people. All care experienced young people are supported very well in the school. Enhanced arrangements at points of transition and additional support helps them feel safe and included.

- Staff encourage young people to express their views regularly as part of class learning by discussing topical themes and engaging in emotional check-ins at tutor time. Effective partnerships enhance young people's opportunities to express their views at events as part of a Glasgow-wide pupil voice group. These opportunities help a minority of young people develop a sense of how much their views are valued. All young people attend their annual review and transition meetings. This helps them feel included, develops their self-advocacy skills, and provides real-life opportunities to influence important decisions affecting them. There is scope for staff to develop all young people's preferred methods of communication further to support a minority of young people to contribute their views more fully.

- Senior leaders and staff know young people's needs well and fulfil their statutory duties effectively. Senior leaders and pastoral staff have improved day-to-day arrangements to ensure that young people are supported appropriately when required. Helpful detailed morning meetings allow staff to discuss young people's wellbeing and identify appropriate supports. This allows staff to consider and adjust the pace of planned learning experiences to maximise engagement for learners. As a result, young people feel confident to speak with staff if they feel anxious or need help.

- Senior leaders monitor young people's attendance closely. Where appropriate, they engage well with partners to support improvement in instances where a young person's attendance causes concern. For most young people, this is beginning to improve attendance. A few young people continue to find regular and sustained attendance a challenge. This is adversely affecting their outcomes. Staff should continue to find ways to support and include all young people in the life of the school.

- A small number of exclusions have been recorded in the last three years. The number of exclusions has fallen yearly and sit below local authority and national averages. Senior leaders and pastoral staff implement alternatives to exclusion and organise additional support where appropriate. Senior leaders should continue as planned to minimise exclusions at the school.

- Across the year young people participate in a wide range of events and activities that celebrate the diversity and culture of all learners at the school. Young people enjoyed a 'culture day' at the school. This is helping them to understand different cultures including exploring national dress, foods and celebrations that differ to their own. Young people receive a religious and

moral education programme of study appropriate to their needs. This helps young people to develop their own values and beliefs and understand those of others.

■ Staff gather a range of information about each young person. They use this to develop helpful learning and support profiles, which include young people's targets. These targets focus predominantly on curriculum learning. Teachers should consider how young people's targets can take greater account of each young person's barriers to learning. This will support teachers to develop more bespoke programmes and targeted interventions based on young people's individual needs. Teachers should continue to engage all young people, parents and carers in creating young people's targets.

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy
■ Most young people make good progress in their learning from prior levels of attainment. All young people in the BGE require significant individualised adaptations to their curriculum to support them to access their learning. The school should continue with plans to develop more robust arrangements for tracking and monitoring young people's progress. Young people in the senior phase attain a broad range of qualifications from National level 1 to level 5.

Attainment in literacy
■ Most young people are making good progress in their literacy taking account of all young people's age and additional support needs. All young people in the BGE are working between early and third level of CFE.

Listening and Talking
■ Across the school most young people communicate with staff and each other effectively. Most young people speak clearly. The majority of young people are making good progress in developing their social communication skills in school and in the community. In the senior phase, most young people confidently answer questions and give feedback. They listen to each other and comment on what they have heard. The school should continue to support young people to build confidence in expressing themselves and develop further communication supports for those working at earlier stages.

Reading
■ Young people have access to a range of books and stories to meet their needs and interests. They visit the libraries in the school and local community regularly. A minority are able to give details of books they are reading or recall meaning from previous poems and film clips. A few children read fluently and with expression. A minority of young people read for information, such as identifying and reading logos from common brands and packaging. The use of visual supports, when used well help, learners read and recall key facts about learning or understand what is expected of them. Teachers should consider increasing the use of visual supports and other strategies to support reading and understanding where needed.

Writing
■ Across the school young people are learning to write for a range of purposes at different levels such as creative story writing, describing characters or writing about themselves and their interests. For example, young people from the pupil council write their own minutes. A few young people write summaries of passages and chapters from books they are reading. Teachers should build on the use of digital technologies to support those young people who require this support to write.

Attainment in numeracy

■ Most young people are making good progress in their numeracy taking account of all young people's age and additional support needs. All young people in the BGE are working between early and third level of CFE.

Number. Money and measure

■ Almost all young people know the days of the week and months of the year. Almost all learners tell the time on an analogue clock using o'clock, and half and quarter past. Most young people tell the time using exact minutes. A few young people use roman numerals to tell the time on a clock face. Most young people order events according to their chronological order. Most state the temperature identified against a scale on a thermometer. Almost all young people can separate numbers into tens and units. Almost all add and subtract two-digit numbers to within one hundred. A few young people extend patterns using dots. Young people need to develop and apply their numeracy skills further in real life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

■ Most young people name simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. A minority know the properties of two-dimensional shapes. Almost all young people use a simple grid to state an objects position. Young people need to develop their skills further in understanding the properties of shapes and describing directions of movement.

Information handling

■ A few young people use probability to predict how likely an event will happen. A few young people gather information using a tally table. A few young people present information in a simple bar graph. Young people need to develop their skills further in using data and information in a range of methods in handling information.

Attainment over time

■ Most young people in the BGE are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment. Young people's curricular plans show they are progressing well in their learning against expectations. Senior leaders need to continue with their plans to develop more robust systems to track and monitor young people's progress in the BGE.

■ Young people in the senior phase attain national qualifications across a wide range of curricular subjects. Young people have broadly maintained their levels of attainment for the last three years within the significant increase in qualifications attained in session 2021/22. At Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) National SCQF level 2 young people have increased the number of qualifications attained from 37 to 79.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

■ Almost all young people experience success in the wide range of personal achievement opportunities across the school. This includes success demonstrated in a range of clubs organised within the school. These support young people to demonstrate their skills well in the four capacities of CFE. Young people's participation in wider achievements supports them to develop their independent living skills. As a result, a few young people travel independently to and from school each day. Most young people demonstrate their skills and abilities in interacting with people new to them. Most learners are confident when introducing themselves and are polite and friendly. A range of activities based in the local community support most young people to demonstrate their skills in unfamiliar settings. This is helping them to develop their confidence when visiting new venues. The leadership team track and monitor young people's participation in clubs and wider achievements. This supports them to identify any young person at risk of missing out. The leadership team should continue with

their plans to build on this to track and monitor the skills young people gain through their wider achievements. This will help them to support young people better to develop their skills further based on what they can already do.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders use PEF to fund additional support workers. These provide valuable support to young people and their families in school and at home. This helps young people who struggle to attend school to increase their attendance. Senior leaders should consider tracking and monitoring the impact of these interventions more effectively to ensure they continue to lead to an increase in young people's attendance. Young people are supported well to develop their plans for when they leave school. As a result, most young people move on to a positive destination after leaving school. These include employment or further education placements. Senior leaders used PEF to improve the school playground. Young people now use this effectively to have fun or to regulate their emotions. This helps a few young people to maintain their engagement in their learning.

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.