Summarised inspection findings

Arbroath Academy

Angus Council

27 June 2023

Key contextual information

School Name: Arbroath Academy
Council: Angus Council
SEED number: 5307031
Roll: 657

Arbroath Academy is located in the town of Arbroath in Angus. In September 2021, 28.6% of young people lived in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In February 2022, 28% of young people were registered for free school meals.

The headteacher has been in post since 2022 and is supported by three full-time depute headteachers, one of whom is in an acting role.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average. Exclusions are significantly below the national average. Senior leaders highlighted challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included high levels of absence and prolonged disengagement from a few learners. Staff reported that disengagement from a sizeable minority of young people during periods of remote learning has had a significant impact on the attainment of these learners.

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

■ Across the school, relationships are very positive between staff and young people. The school's recently refreshed values help to develop a supportive climate for learning. These, along with school routines such as the 'classroom welcome', support almost all young people's readiness to learn. Young people are polite and courteous. Young people talk enthusiastically about the importance of trying their best, not getting distracted and listening to others.

■ Most teachers provide clear explanations and instructions which help the majority of young people understand and participate well in their learning. In the majority of lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and what successful learning looks like with young people. However, young people often do not know clearly enough whether they have been successful in their learning. An important next step across the school is for teachers to have increased clarity about what they want their young people to learn rather than focusing on the completion of tasks. This has the potential to support young people to evaluate their progress more easily and take greater responsibility for their learning. Teachers need to increase their use of high-quality plenary sessions to help young people reflect on and understand their learning during lessons.

■ Most young people value the support and encouragement provided by teachers both within and outwith lessons. In almost all lessons, teachers help young people who require additional support with their learning sensitively by working directly with them. Teachers should consider a greater range of approaches to meet all learners' needs. In most lessons, young people would benefit from greater levels of challenge. Teachers need to plan tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty and improve their understanding of how well learners are progressing. An important next step is for all staff to raise their expectations and aspirations for young people.

■ In a few lessons, teachers demonstrate highly-effective learning and teaching practice overall. They use a range of teaching approaches that include collaborative learning, digital technology and the promotion of independent learning. In a few lessons, teachers use a range of active learning strategies well to motivate young people and engage them enthusiastically in their learning. A few teachers use questioning skilfully to check for understanding and to develop higher order thinking. These examples of highly effective practice need to be shared and adopted more widely across the school.

■ In the majority of lessons, tasks are directed to the whole class with the pace of learning controlled by the teacher. As a result, the majority of learners in these classes adopt a passive approach to their learning. Teachers should consider how to motivate and develop the confidence of young people by offering them more opportunities to lead their learning. There is scope for learning activities to be more creative, innovative and stimulating.

- In most faculties, staff use a range of assessment strategies effectively, such as project-based work and 'skills snapshot' assessments to measure learners' progress. These allow young people to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills appropriately. Staff should continue to develop a greater variety of approaches to formative assessment to inform young people's learning and to help them gather ongoing evidence of young people's progress. Teachers need to ensure all young people understand their strengths and next steps in learning.

- Teachers are becoming increasingly confident in making assessment judgements in the Broad General Education stage (BGE). They have regular opportunities to moderate their judgements with other teachers within their faculties and with subject specialists in neighbouring schools. This mainly focuses on verifying the teacher's assessment judgments. Teachers should continue to develop their understanding of how to use the learning and teaching cycle to inform their planning of learning, teaching and assessment. As a first step, they should consider more clearly how they are going to measure learners' success at the planning stage. Teachers have identified correctly the need to make improved use of attainment data from primary schools and standardised test data to benchmark their BGE attainment data as a further check on its validity. They also recognise the need to work more closely with colleagues in primary schools to moderate and develop a shared understanding of standards in literacy and numeracy.

- In the senior phase, teachers have opportunities to validate their assessment judgements through discussion and verifying assessment judgments with schools across the local authority. This helps them to have an increasingly strong understanding of assessment and moderation. A few teachers also undertake additional responsibilities with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). This helps them to have a better understanding of standards and is strengthening their professional judgments on young people's progress and attainment. Senior leaders have implemented effective measures to ensure that teachers' assessment decisions are consistent.

- Senior leaders have very recently introduced a whole school system to track and monitor the progress of young people across the BGE. Senior leaders need to develop further their approaches to assessment to ensure that progress is being tracked within and across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Staff should continue to develop tracking process with primary colleagues to better capture attainment and progress of children and young people over time.

- In the senior phase, senior leaders have reintroduced the Angus schools' 'Pupil Tracking' system this session. They have developed a strategy to clarify the responsibilities of teachers, departments, and the wider pupil support team in using this system. Staff are beginning to identify underachievement at an earlier stage and intervene to support individuals and groups of young people to improve attainment. Senior leaders should continue to develop the skills of staff in using this data to inform their planning at faculty and classroom level. They should also continue to use the data to evaluate the impact of interventions for individuals and groups to raise the attainment of all young people.

- All teachers are monitoring and tracking learners' progress to a limited extent as they use the information mainly for reporting purposes. Middle leaders need to work more closely with teachers in their faculties to make better use of tracking data across all stages. They need to use the information more consistently to inform their planning of learning, teaching and assessment so that they can better meet young people's needs.

■ Staff have recently reviewed their approaches to reporting in the BGE to provide more evaluative information on young people's strengths, next steps and skills development. They should continue to develop approaches to assessment that will enable all staff to report effectively on these areas. Parents and young people would also benefit from improved information on progress between and within all levels in the BGE over time. This would enable staff and parents to understand and support better the progress of young people over time.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

| **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

■ Senior leaders have implemented strategies to raise attainment over the past session. While there are some areas of strength, important weaknesses remain. In the BGE, there is a need to improve the quality and reliability of assessment judgements regarding literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders recognise the need to develop a strategic overview of young people's attainment over time in the BGE. There are important weaknesses across a range of attainment measures in the senior phase. These include literacy and numeracy measures, average complementary tariff scores, the attainment of those affected by poverty and breadth and depth measures. Furthermore, senior leaders need to ensure robust tracking and monitoring of young people's participation in achievements to measure the development of young people's skills.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy
Broad General Education (BGE)
■ In 2021/22, most young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level or better in all literacy measures and in numeracy by the end of S3. These outcomes are a decline on pre-pandemic performance where almost all young people achieved CFE third level or better. The majority of young people achieved CfE fourth level by the end of S3 in all literacy measures and a minority achieved CFE fourth level numeracy.

■ Senior leaders recognise the need to improve the quality and reliability of assessment judgements regarding literacy and numeracy. This includes re-establishing previous networks with their associated primary schools. Senior leaders and staff who lead literacy and numeracy developments are implementing strategies to improve young people's literacy and numeracy skills. This includes programmes and initiatives to embed key skills. Staff leads need to plan for curriculum areas other than English and mathematics to contribute to the planning, delivery and assessment of literacy and numeracy. Staff who lead on literacy and numeracy need to ensure young people make appropriate progress. Staff should use tracking data to plan better support for individuals and cohorts as they transition through the BGE. They should also use tracking data to identify individuals who would require support to achieve an appropriate level in the senior phase.

Senior phase
■ Senior and middle leaders have identified attainment in literacy in the senior phase as a key priority for improvement. They have used additional funding to employ a few staff to work in the community with young people who are not attending school on a regular basis. These staff are helping a few young people to achieve appropriate literacy and numeracy qualifications. Staff who lead on literacy and numeracy have increased pathways in the senior phase to increase the opportunities for young people to achieve literacy and numeracy qualifications at the appropriate level. Senior leaders should ensure that more young people attain the course

award at Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF) level 5 for literacy and numeracy. Staff who lead on literacy and numeracy also need to set realistic targets as part of a more rigorous tracking process to motivate young people to achieve in line with their needs and ability.

Leavers

- In the latest year, 2021/22, performance at SCQF level 3 or better to SCQF level 6 or better is at its lowest level for the five-year period for literacy and numeracy. Between 2017/18 to 2020/21, almost all young people achieved SCQF level four or better in literacy and numeracy.

- A majority of young people leaving school have achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy since 2019/20. A minority of leavers have achieved SCQF level 6 since 2017/18. Performance at all these levels is generally in line with the virtual comparator (VC).

- Between 2017/18 and 2020/21, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. In 2021/22, this declined to a minority of young people achieving SCQF level 5 or better. Since 2017/18, a few young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. For both SCQF level 5 and level 6, school performance is generally in line with the VC.

Cohorts

- At S4, since 2018/19, most young people have achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy. This is significantly lower than the VC for the latest year. The majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in 2021/22. This is in line with the VC. Young people's performance at SCQF level 3 or better to SCQF level 5 or better shows no consistent pattern of improvement. By S5, based on the S5 roll, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy from 2017/18 to 2021/22. This is in line with the VC. A minority of young people by S5 achieved SCQF level 6 between 2017/18 to 2021/22. In 2020/21, this was significantly much lower than the VC and significantly lower than the VC in 2021/22. By S6, based on the S6 roll, almost all young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy and a majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy. Performance at these levels is in line with the VC.

- At S4, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy in 2021/22. This is significantly lower than the VC having been significantly higher than the VC in 2017/18 and 2019/20. A minority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in 2021/22. Although this has declined from being a majority of young people achieving SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in 2019/20 and 2020/21, it remains in line with the VC. By S5, based on the S5 roll, a majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy over the last five years. This is in line with the VC. In 2020/21 and 2021/22, a few young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This is in line with the VC. By S6, based on the S6 roll, a majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in the latest year. Although this is in line with the VC, there is no identifiable pattern of improvement. A minority of young people have achieved SCQF level 6 in the latest five years, in line with the VC. The percentage of young people achieving this measure has been declining since 2017/18.

Attainment over time
BGE

- Senior leaders do not have data on young people's attainment over time in the BGE other than for literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. They have introduced systems to track young people's progress through the BGE. They should now use these systems to ensure staff gather and use reliable data over time. Senior leaders and staff need to ensure young people are making appropriate progress in their learning and undertaking aspirational learning pathways.

Senior phase

■ Senior leaders are implementing strategies to raise the attainment and achievement of all young people. They use data to highlight attainment gaps and particularly to identify young people at risk of leaving school without the appropriate level of qualifications. This is informing well-considered interventions such as mentoring and intensive support targeted to individuals who are at risk of not achieving their best qualifications. There is evidence that most young people who are receiving this additional support are making better progress this session. Senior leaders have introduced recently a strategy to ensure all young people experience a range of courses matched more effectively to their level of ability. They need to ensure that all learners, particularly those who require additional support for learning, progress appropriately through the senior phase, attaining the highest quality of passes and grades.

■ Middle leaders need to take greater responsibility for improving attainment in their faculties. This remains an important area for improvement.

Improving attainment for all
Leavers

■ Attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of leavers was in line with the VC between 2017/18 and 2020/21, when using complementary tariff points. In the latest year, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers was significantly lower than the VC. Since 2017/18, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of leavers has been line with the VC, apart from 2020/21 when it was significantly lower than the VC. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of leavers has been significantly much lower or lower than the VC since 2019/20. Senior leaders recognise there is no consistent pattern of improvement.

Cohorts

■ In S4, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people has been in line with the VC from 2017/18 until the latest year where it is significantly much lower than the VC. By S5, based on the S5 roll, and by S6 based on the S6 roll, the attainment of these learners is in line with the VC.

■ In S4, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people is significantly lower than the VC for the latest year, having been in line with the VC since 2019/20. By S5, based on the S5 roll, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people is in line with the VC for the latest year, having been significantly much lower than the VC in 2020/21. By S6, based on the S6 roll, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people has been in line with the VC since 2017/18.

■ In S4, the attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people is significantly lower than the VC, having been in line with the VC since 2019/20. By S5, based on the S5 roll, the attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people has been significantly lower than the VC since 2018/19, apart from 2020/21 when it was significantly much lower than the VC. By S6, based on the S6 roll, the attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people has been in line with the VC since 2017/18, apart from 2020/21 when it was significantly much lower than the VC.

■ There is no identifiable pattern of improvement for the lowest attaining 20%, the middle attaining 20% and the highest attaining 20% of learners.

Breadth and depth

■ At S4, a majority of young people achieved six or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better until the latest year 2021/22. This declined to a minority of young people achieving six or more awards at this level in 2021/22, which is significantly lower than the VC. A minority of young

people achieved seven or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better from 2020/21. Percentages of young people achieving seven awards have been increasing from 2017/18, in line with the VC. Since 2019/20, a minority of young people achieved six or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. The percentages of young people gaining one or more to six or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better are generally significantly lower than the VC over the latest five years, with the exception of 2020/21 where performance was in line with the VC. More young people achieved three or more to six or more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better over the past five years. Young people are benefiting from gaining qualifications from providers other than the SQA at SCQF level 4 or better. Senior leaders recognise the need to improve the quality of passes at SCQF level 5A or better as young people's performance is generally significantly lower than the VC.

■ By S5, based on the S5 roll, a majority of young people achieved four or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better between 2017/18 and 2021/22 and a majority achieved five or more awards at this level in 2021/22, having previously been a minority. These measures are in line with the VC. The percentages of young people gaining three or more to five or more SCQF level 5A or better have been increasing since 2017/18. From 2018/19 to 2020/21, the percentage of young people gaining three or more to five or more SCQF level 5A or above were generally significantly lower than the VC but are in line with the VC for the latest year, 2021/22. Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, a minority of young people achieved four or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better. This is in line with the VC, having been significantly much lower in 2020/21 and significantly lower than the VC since 2018/19. A few young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better over the latest five years. This is generally significantly lower than the VC. A few young people achieve two or more to five or more awards at SCQF level 6A. This is generally significantly lower than the VC.

■ By S6, based on the S6 roll, most young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 5C since 2019/20. Performance at SCQF level 5A or better is in line with the VC over the latest five years. Since 2018/19, a majority of young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 6C, in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved four or more and five or more awards at SCQF level 6C in line with the VC. An increasing number of young people are attaining SCQF level 6A or better for two or more to five or more awards. A minority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better. This is significantly lower than the VC. A few young people achieved two or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better with a few learners achieving two or more awards at SCQF level 7A. These measures are in line with the VC.

■ Senior leaders have strengthened tracking processes and provided data that projects improved performance for breadth and depth measures at the end of this session.

Overall quality of learners' achievement
■ The majority of young people develop a broad range of skills, knowledge and attributes through participation in an extensive range of activities to achieve beyond the classroom. This includes school trips, sports, debating and clubs. Through these activities, young people are developing skills including increased confidence and teamwork. Through volunteering, young people are contributing well to the ethos and wider life of the school and the local community.

■ A few young people are developing leadership and communication skills through their organisation of whole school events and trips, such as the Rwanda exchange. Involvement in the Rwanda exchange is developing young people's global citizenship awareness. They are involved in fundraising for this experience, which also helps them to take responsibility as young adults.

- The development of leadership skills is a key feature of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme. Young people deliver input to year group assemblies and they support their peers to promote positive relationships effectively. The school captains also lead assemblies, whole school events and liaise with senior leaders to discuss matters related to school events. Young people would value more opportunities to develop their role in leading and improving the school.

- Young people develop their skills for life, learning and work through the effective Developing the Young Workforce programme. Young people work with employers through the S2 Wider Achievement programme and enter national competitions. This is developing their confidence, communication skills and improving their understanding of the world of work.

- Staff celebrate young people's achievements effectively in a number of ways. This includes, for example, using whole school and departmental social media platforms and newsletters and organising an annual awards ceremony. This session, young people's achievements, in and outwith school, are displayed on the school's 'achievement wall'. This emphasises the importance of learners' achievements in contributing to the ethos of the school.

- Senior leaders recognise that an important next step is to track and monitor young people's achievements in order to identify and address any gaps. They need to develop young people's understanding of the skills they are developing as a result of participating in wider achievement.

Equity for all learners

- Staff are committed to ensuring equity for young people as a result of having a strong understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school. Senior leaders have led a well-considered whole school focus on the cost of the school day. This is removing barriers to young people's participation and achievement through the provision of resources and uniform so that young people are ready to learn.

- Senior leaders use the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to employ additional staffing, provide resources and ensure young people can take part in events and trips. This includes, for example, most young people attending an S1 residential experience where they develop important teamwork, resilience and independence skills. Additional staff funded through the PEF are working with disengaged learners. The PEF is also used to open the library in the evenings so that young people can complete homework in a supported environment. Although these initiatives are strengthening the attendance and engagement of young people supported through the PEF, there is a need for senior leaders to consider how these initiatives are accelerating progress in reducing the poverty related attainment gap.

- Senior leaders and staff need to consider how to use data more rigorously to monitor the progress and attainment of learners affected by poverty. The attainment of young people leaving school living in SIMD decile one, when compared using complementary tariff points, is significantly much lower than the national average and has been since 2017/18, apart from 2019/20 and 2020/21 when it was significantly lower. The attainment of young people leaving school living in SIMD two, when compared using complementary tariff points, is significantly lower than the national average. Senior leaders should review how the PEF is used to raise attainment and accelerate progress for all young people affected by poverty, in line with national expectations.

- Almost all young people move to a positive destination on leaving school. This has been in line with the VC since 2017/18. The majority of young people go to further or higher education, with a minority going to employment. These destinations are broadly in line with the VC. Those who

leave in S4 and S5 mainly progress to further education, which is above the VC. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to explore how to ensure young people progress to an appropriate pathway through the senior phase and on leaving school.

Other relevant evidence

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to compliance with the Nutritional Regulations and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007(the Act). Health and Nutrition Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and children. Inspectors also explored the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the catering provider.

■ The school library is used as a venue for homework to help young people who may find working at home challenging for a variety of reasons. Young people in the senior phase use the library for study periods. Senior leaders are planning with staff to initiate a programme, 'Reading for Pleasure', to improve young people's literacy as part of their action plan.

■ Young people experience their entitlements to high-quality PE and RME. They receive their entitlement to Languages 1+2 in the BGE in line with national expectations.

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.