

# Summarised inspection findings

Alloa Academy

Clackmannanshire Council

23 April 2024

## Key contextual information

School Name: Alloa Academy  
Council: Clackmannanshire Council  
SEED number: 5702534  
Roll: 733

Alloa Academy is a comprehensive secondary school located in the town of Alloa, Clackmannanshire. The school has four associated primary schools. The headteacher has been in post since August 2022. He is supported by four deputy headteachers – two of whom are in substantive posts.

Attendance is generally above the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In September 2022, 40.8% of young people lived in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In February 2023, 27.9% of young people were registered for free school meals.

In September 2022, the school reported that 40.7% of young people 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 is highly regarded by the school community. He drives forward change relentlessly and has a collaborative and coherent approach to school improvement. He is open and approachable and his passion for improving the school is enthusing staff. The senior leadership team work together well to refine approaches and implement systems which aim to improve learners' experiences more consistently. Although these improvements have been implemented recently, most members of the school community feel that the school is well led and is improving.
- The vision that every member of the school community is valued, included and respected accurately informs the strategic direction of the school. The vision drives collaborative and collegiate working within a common and unified purpose. The vision is successful in ensuring almost all members of the school community feel valued and included. The headteacher has correctly identified the need for staff to be empowered to lead, and contribute to leading, change.
- The core values of 'respect, ambition and resilience' are displayed well and referenced regularly throughout the school. They were developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders. They are understood well and underpin respectful and positive relationships across the school community.
- Senior leaders have streamlined and restructured school improvement planning processes. They identify priorities that will have the most immediate and positive impact on young people. These overall priorities are clearly captured in a succinct three-year improvement plan which reflects local and national priorities. This informs departmental improvement plans and the work of staff improvement groups, who devise plans with a focus on addressing these priorities. This is emerging practice, although there is already evidence of improvement as a result. Young people, parents, staff and partners are involved in identifying improvement priorities. Senior leaders should continue with plans to increase opportunities to seek parents' and young people's views. They also need to help young people and parents to understand better how offering their views has led to improvements.
- Senior leaders have strengthened systems to measure the impact of improvement actions. This includes a well-planned whole-school quality assurance calendar which is being used to structure self-evaluation activities more consistently across the school. An important next step is for senior leaders to further develop staff's skills in undertaking more focused and targeted quality assurance activities.
- Middle leaders welcome how they are empowered to lead change in their faculty departments. Senior leaders work regularly with middle leaders in their role as faculty links. They have

successfully undertaken a range of well-thought-out actions to further develop middle leaders' role and impact. Senior leaders should now provide greater challenge to middle leaders to ensure they analyse data more effectively. This should be with the aim of identifying areas of learning and teaching which require a specific focus to support young people's attainment and develop consistently high-quality learning experiences.

- Senior leaders have considered carefully the impact of staff development activities. They have aligned improvement planning approaches more closely with quality assurance, staff development and organisational processes. Senior leaders have prioritised collegiate time for staff to take forward important priorities. Senior leaders ensure that improvement priorities and actions are manageable and interconnected. Staff are clear about the rationale for change. Senior leaders should continue to guide the pace of change carefully.
- Staff are enthusiastic and motivated to lead improvement priorities. All teaching staff are empowered to lead through well-thought-out improvement groups. Staff feel an increasing ownership of improvements and a shared sense of responsibility. This has resulted in collaborative-improvement work such as the introduction of the learning and teaching standard as well as an agreed protocol for self-evaluation. This is beginning to improve identified aspects of individual teachers' practice.
- Senior leaders have correctly identified the importance of young people's leadership. Young people's leadership of change in school and the community is being supported to increase through a series of carefully considered actions, which are now in place. The Columba 1400 group, for example, has led to important work to support peers through the creation and provision of a breakfast club, fundraising efforts and delivering transition activities. A few young people lead policy development, achievement activities for peers or lead in their local community. A few young people across all stages lead through the newly established Pupil Parliament. These young people are clear about their role in representing the views of peers as well as beginning to lead aspects of school improvement.
- Staff are supported well to undertake a wide range of career-long professional learning opportunities at school, local and national level. This includes staff undertaking subject specific learning or achieving leadership qualifications. Planned professional learning is closely linked to the broad areas of the school improvement plan and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning. Senior leaders are refining professional learning processes for staff. They should ensure that teaching staff are supported to consider a deeper understanding of both evidence and impact related to professional learning on learning and teaching. This should help further improve teachers' shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching.
- Senior leaders have devised a plan to allocate Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). They now need to develop a more targeted approach to the use of this funding. They should identify more clearly where complex socio-economic disadvantages may be a barrier to young people attaining appropriately. They should then support staff to measure their interventions more effectively. This will allow staff to more efficiently and accurately accelerate progress for these young people in line with national expectations. Senior leaders also need to ensure greater involvement of young people, staff and parents in devising and leading aspects of the plan.
- Senior leaders and staff are proactive in seeking a wide range of highly effective partners, including those in the local community. Staff work well with partners to plan and evaluate programmes. This work is widening learning opportunities and support options for young

people. Communication between school staff and key partners is regular, clear and based on mutual respect.

- Senior leaders work effectively with partners to ensure the curriculum takes account of the developing needs of young people and the local economy. There is a strong focus on employability in this targeted work. Senior leaders have a clear vision for more explicitly developing this work across all departments in line with Developing Young Workforce (DYW) priorities. Groups of staff work with faculty departments to plan and progress appropriate priorities. School leaders recognise that they are at an early stage in taking this forward. The proactive approach to partnership working in employability has resulted in a wide and useful range of curriculum activities designed to introduce learners to the world of work. The minority of young people involved in these programmes are involved in activities such as vocational training, advice and mentoring to support them in their career aspirations. This is positively impacting on building their confidence and self-esteem.

## 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

- There is a calm and supportive learning environment throughout the school. Young people find this helps them to engage and participate in their learning. In almost all classes, young people and staff have mutually respectful and positive relationships.
- A staff-led improvement group is helping to drive forward improvements in learning, teaching and assessment. The Alloa Academy Learning and Teaching Standard is helping teachers build a shared understanding of the features of effective learning. It provides a helpful and consistent framework for all staff to plan learning. As a result of the framework, young people benefit from a greater consistency in core routines and expectations. Teachers should use this agreed framework to continue to explore the key features of what high-quality learning looks like. Young people's learning experiences are not yet of a consistently high enough quality across the school.
- Almost all teachers make consistent use of starter activities. In a few lessons, these engage young people quickly and create opportunities to revisit prior learning. In a minority of lessons, too much time is spent on them. Teachers should consider how long they allocate to tasks and activities in order to maximise young people's understanding and progress.
- In most classes, young people are attentive and ready to learn. In a majority of lessons, learning is overly teacher led and lessons are delivered at the same pace for all learners. Young people have few opportunities to work at their own individual pace. This is having an impact on young people developing an appropriate depth of learning. In a few classes, young people plan and lead aspects of their learning. They are actively engaged in their learning in these lessons. Learners would benefit from increased opportunities to lead and take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Staff find the information about learners contained within the online tool they have created, "Know Your Learners", very useful. They use this to support learners on an individual basis within class. In a few lessons, teachers use this information in their planning of learning activities to skilfully meet the needs of individual learners. In most lessons, planned learning activities are directed at the majority of young people. In a minority of lessons, learners are highly motivated by creative and well-designed tasks. However, this is not yet consistent across the school.
- Almost all teachers use questioning to check understanding and recall information, often at a whole class level. In a few lessons, teachers build a deeper understanding through highly skilled questioning. This prompts young people in these classes to reflect much more deeply and apply critical thinking skills. Senior leaders should ensure this practice is shared more widely to promote these skills.

- Young people have a free choice between using a digital device and writing in their jotters, as best suits their learning style. Both young people and parents value resources supplied to support class and home learning. Young people use digital technologies effectively to broaden and deepen their learning in a few curriculum areas. Staff have developed a clear strategy to embed digital learning across the curriculum.
- In almost all classes, teachers provide encouraging and effective verbal feedback to young people. In a few lessons, teachers provide regular and specific written feedback. This is driving high expectations and increasing challenge and engagement. In a minority of classes, teachers provide feedback that is not sufficiently specific. Staff should now consider how to provide feedback to support young people to learn independently.
- A minority of teachers are using assessment evidence well to plan future learning activities. In these lessons, young people are enjoying their learning as the activities are appropriately challenging and build on their prior learning. Currently, assessment evidence is not being used consistently across curricular areas to inform lesson planning. An important next step is for faculty teams to consider how assessment evidence is used to plan challenging learning experiences for all young people.
- In most curricular areas, summative assessments are used to provide evidence of learners' attainment and progress. The reliability of summative assessments in the senior phase is checked through planned verification meetings. Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) markers are leading discussions at a subject level, increasing staff understanding of the national standard. In the broad general education (BGE), teachers should use a broader range of assessment evidence when assessing learners' progress. This should be used to inform judgements on Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels during the BGE. More robust moderation arrangements are required that result in more reliable professional judgements of whether young people have achieved curriculum for excellence levels. Staff value opportunities to work with colleagues to develop a shared understanding of standards and increase their confidence in making judgements on these. A few faculties have made informal arrangements with other schools in the local authority to share expectations of standards.
- Senior leaders have introduced a new whole school tracking system which is also used to report on young people's progress. Learners receive three 'milestone' reports throughout the year. These are helping young people to understand their current progress and next steps in learning. Almost all parents comment positively on the increase in the information provided and feel comments are more personalised, reflecting their child's progress and next steps in learning. In most reports, the comments are based mainly on summative assessments. The next steps in learning, at times, contain general rather than specific advice.
- The whole school tracking system is providing information on young people's progress through CfE levels and current working grades in the senior phase. Teachers use faculty tracking systems to record and track young people's progress. Teachers should now revisit how tracking data is used to inform planning and evaluation of effective classroom-based strategies for all young people. They should consider how they better monitor and accelerate the progress of identified groups of young people across the school and in their curriculum area. For example, those young people who have additional learning needs or those affected by socio-economic disadvantage.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff are working to develop further a curriculum which is responsive to the needs of their learners. New vocational pathways are being delivered within the school and the number of subjects offered in the senior phase has increased in the last five years. This includes Foundation Apprenticeships across ten subject areas. These pathways include a range of appropriate options to suit individual learner needs.
- Young people receive their entitlement to learn in all curricular areas in S1 and S2. Not all young people receive their full entitlement to experience the full range of experiences and outcomes, across all curriculum areas, at third curriculum level by the end of S3. Senior leaders have started the process of reviewing learners' entitlement to modern language learning under the 1+2 policy and recognise the need to ensure young people receive this throughout the BGE. Senior leaders should also review learners' entitlements to ensure young people in S5 and S6 can access learning in religious and moral education (RME).
- The majority of departments plan well for progression using experiences and outcomes. A minority of departments are revising course planning to incorporate skills development and more project-based approaches to delivery and assessment. Staff would benefit from collaborative creation of a curriculum rationale that provides clarity of expectation when planning BGE courses and progression into the senior phase. BGE planning needs to account also for flexible course delivery, particularly for those learners requiring more challenge across their learning.
- In the majority of curricular areas, staff are not yet working with colleagues in associated primary schools to gather curricular transition data that will help to inform course planning in the BGE. Senior leaders recognise the need to address this in order that all learners joining Alloa Academy experience a coherent and progressive curriculum when transitioning from primary school.
- In a minority of departments, planning takes account of assessing progress in literacy and numeracy. As a next step, teachers in all curriculum areas should consider literacy and numeracy in BGE course planning.
- A minority of BGE learners follow a bespoke curriculum, supported by staff. Senior leaders should continue to monitor this provision to ensure that these young people receive their entitlements to learn in each curricular area from S1 to S3 in the BGE.
- Young people following bespoke arrangements and nurture provision benefit from a range of additional outdoor learning experiences as part of their BGE. This includes experiences in community and school allotments and auto mechanics. All learners do not yet have ongoing access to appropriately planned outdoor learning within the BGE.
- There are effective examples of staff linking curriculum pathways to employment opportunities and the world of work. There are plans in place to introduce a metaskills framework across the school. However, young people are not yet able to identify and articulate the skills that they are developing across the curriculum. In a few departments, staff use local market information (LMI) and employability information well to support young people's learning.
- Senior leaders should review current registration provision, which accounts for fifty minutes of learning per week. There is a need to ensure that the purpose of this provision is well



understood by all staff so that young people receive consistent and enriching learning experiences.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- School staff prioritise and support the wellbeing of families very well. Senior leaders and staff have developed very positive relationships with parents to foster an open and trusting ethos. Most parents report that their child is making positive progress and that staff support young people well, particularly if they require additional support. Staff are welcoming and responsive when contacted by parents.
- The Parent Council (PC) works well with school staff. They are consulted regularly about planned changes and improvements. Recently, members of the parent council worked with staff to improve how teachers report on young people's progress to parents. This has resulted in more parents agreeing that reports are accessible, easier to understand and can demonstrate how their child is progressing with their learning. Members of the PC are aware of the context of the school and are therefore able to lead carefully considered fundraising activities to support school improvements. They continue to explore approaches to engage more parents in their work. This includes increasing communication platforms to inform the wider parent forum of their work.
- Senior leaders have developed a highly effective Family Wellbeing Partnership, which is increasing parental involvement. This initiative supports families in a wide variety of ways, tailored to their individual needs. This includes participating in after-school programmes and initiatives through the "Family Wellbeing Partnership – Community around the School" group. A few parents have been supported positively to gain additional qualifications and skills.
- Senior leaders have improved processes to communicate with parents. This includes using electronic methods, social media, sending termly newsletters and redefining the school website. Almost all parents feel that communication from school staff and senior leaders has improved.

## 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.

### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very 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

- The headteacher and senior leaders place a very strong emphasis on treating every young person as an individual. Staff have a clear focus on embedding a nurturing and empathetic approach across the school. As a result, young people are proud of their school and have a strong sense of belonging. Most young people feel safe in school. Most young people say they have a trusted adult to speak with if they feel upset or worried. This is enabling the very calm and nurturing ethos across the school.
- Staff and partners have a very good understanding of the importance of wellbeing in raising young people's attainment and achievement. Staff use the wellbeing indicators well in classrooms and in supporting young people. They use them in questionnaires and conversations to measure success in improving aspects of young people's wellbeing. Staff support young people very well to reflect and comment on their progress in feeling safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included. Pastoral care staff helpfully track the wellbeing of young people three times each year. This is resulting in young people who have a confident understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Young people also feel confident about making informed choices about their health and wellbeing.
- A key strength of the school is the close partnership that staff build with families and their young people in tandem. Staff are highly inclusive of all members of their school's community. They work with families in a respectful and considerate way. Consequently, parents and carers speak very positively about how well the school includes and supports them and their family. This is enabling staff to get it right for almost every young person in the school as they aim to support the wellbeing of all.
- A well-planned pastoral transition programme is in place from primary schools with enhanced arrangements to support identified young people in their transfer to secondary school. The needs of young people requiring pastoral and/or targeted support are identified well at the point of transition. More specialised support, often in liaison with partners, is available in response to concerns and this is helping young people to feel less anxious and to settle well in high school.
- Additional support needs (ASN) staff identify the needs of young people with an additional support need at an early stage and provide effective planned and targeted supports. These include in-school interventions which are designed to support specific young people. For example, learning spaces for young people with additional support needs and for young people with low levels of engagement in school. There is a nurture facility for young people who struggle to settle in school. Senior leaders deploy ASN staff well to support and lead these facilities. Addressing this re-engagement of young people with school has been a significant

recent priority for school staff. Individual young people benefit from bespoke plans with clear and measurable targets. Staff place a strong focus on the voices of young people and their families in evaluating and progressing these targets. Staff monitor and support young people in each facility through the staged intervention process. This wide range of interventions and supports is working very effectively for almost all of these identified young people. For example, increased attendance and increased school engagement is improving for groups of targeted young people and this further supports their improved wellbeing and opportunities for achievement. Senior leaders and staff should continue to ensure all learning is focussed on the presumption of young people entering or re-entering mainstream education.

- All young people in classes across the school are supported by highly caring and nurturing members of staff. Staff have created a helpful online tool to help teachers to “Know Your Learners”. This is a very useful collation of relevant information about all young people. Senior leaders are planning quality assurance of the shared information as a next step to further improve the impact on outcomes for young people. This should help teachers to plan learning better and ensure that the needs of young people across the school are further well met in all classes.
- A major strength of the school’s work is the support for young people who are care experienced. A high-quality process of care, nurture, advocacy and learning is tailored to the bespoke needs of each care experienced young person. The aspiration of meeting *The Promise* is well advanced in Alloa Academy. All care experienced young people are considered for a Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP). Supported by the local authority’s virtual headteacher a group of staff devise highly individualised plans for each care experienced young person. This is resulting in positive outcomes for young people such as an improved pattern of engagement and attendance as well as improving attainment and a strong sense of belonging to the school. Staff have identified greater numbers of care experienced young people who can then benefit from this individualised support. The majority of care experienced young people responded that they felt they had greatly improved relationships with staff across the school following whole school action to ensure staff supported them.
- Staff work well together to review and monitor patterns of attendance. For example, pupil support staff recently worked with senior leaders to successfully reduce late attendance among S3 learners. Staff have a very clear understanding of those young people who struggle to attend school. The pupil support team work hard to manage and support young people who may be missing from class. They work proactively with the families of young people to improve attendance, building positive relationships they have established. As a result of this joined-up approach, attendance rates are higher than the national average and unauthorized absence rates are lower than the national average. Senior leaders should consider ways to ensure that attendance and timekeeping are monitored in a simple and streamlined way.
- Staff reflect well on the current challenges facing a few young people and families and take appropriate action. For those who struggle to engage with the structure of school, staff have planned a highly effective interim approach. They have created well-planned and bespoke short-term timetables to enable these young people to have a positive engagement with school. Senior leaders should continue to review the provision of bespoke timetables. Plans for transition to full-time mainstream learning should be agreed with young people and families. Staff should now devise a clear single approach to record and monitor all alternative timetables. This should enable an easier process to monitor and review this group of young people.

- Young people across the school are very complimentary about how they are supported by staff. They are proud of their school and feel included in the life of the school. Staff work hard to ensure each challenge faced by a young person is met with individual solutions and aims to lead to positive outcomes. For example, as a result of support which is targeted and effective, attainment is positive and rising for young people with an additional support need when they leave the school. School staff have also successfully reduced the number of exclusions of young people. Almost all young people are fully involved in the life of the school community. An important next step to a further inclusive approach is to include all young people in decision making across all areas of the school.
- PEF is directed towards wellbeing and nurture support that has resulted in improved attendance outcomes for a cohort of learners across various stages. Young people report positively on the impact of the engagement hub, breakfast club and pre-loved store, where they can access a range of uniform items, sanitary products and other materials to support engagement with school life. The PEF funded Engagement and Wellbeing Programme is enabling families and young people to source, access and benefit from a range of supports that remove barriers to participation in school life.
- Young people feel confident about making informed choices about their health and wellbeing. Personal and Social Education (PSE) in S1-S6 is relevant, well structured and current to the context of the school. Pastoral care staff are responsive to challenges raised by young people. For example, young people highlighted concerns about vaping and disrupted sleeping patterns as topics which can impact on their wellbeing. This has led to staff adjusting the PSE programme to incorporate lessons on topics which matter to learners. This is resulting in a more relevant programme and developing young people's understanding of key areas of wellbeing. The PSE programme is progressive and also includes relevant learning on topics such as diversity and equality. Staff should continue to build upon practices which empower young people to help shape the direction of future programmes.
- Young people learn about aspects of equality and discrimination through the whole school curriculum. As a result, they are able to articulate and recognise challenges relating to these issues. A few young people lack confidence when speaking to adults. There would be merit in including more opportunities for young people to speak out in front of peers and others as a key skill for life and work.
- Staff worked closely and effectively with young people to revise the anti-bullying policy. Staff involved external partners for advice and guidance. This was a fully collaborative piece of work involving all stakeholders. This helped young people across the school to develop an in-depth understanding of these issues and be more confident in recognising and reporting cases of bullying. Bullying incidents considers protected characteristics such as race and sexual orientation. Young people say that they are comfortable in reporting bullying and believe the process would be effectively managed. Staff should continue to develop and build on this positive work. They should review the anti-bullying policy regularly to ensure that expectations for all remain clear and that all young people entering the school understand the impact on behaviours.
- Partners across the learning community and third sector work very effectively to identify the needs of young people who have an additional need or who are care experienced. Almost all partners agree that collaboration and communication with the school is strong and contributes to identified young people being supported very well. Successful work involving partners includes Columba 1400, Clax Parents and Carers and the Alloa Academy Engagement and

Wellbeing Support Programme. This work is supporting young people to develop skills and experience for life and work.

- The school operates a targeted approach to identifying a few young people who would benefit from a work placement. They are supported well by school staff in attending these work placements. The implementation of the work placement standard is at an early stage. Most young people are able to access the careers adviser and are well supported when planning for interviews and for college or university applications.

## 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

- In 2022/23, almost all young people achieved CfE third level or better in literacy and most young people achieved third level in numeracy by the end of S3. Less than half of young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy and fourth level in numeracy by the end of S3. There is a pattern of improvement in third level measures since 2018/19. Improvements in fourth level measures have been inconsistent over time. Senior leaders are aware that there is room for improved rigour in staff's approaches to ensuring that assessment information is reliable. Therefore, teachers are beginning to develop approaches to moderating their work with colleagues within the school and plan further collaboration beyond the school. They need to ensure that this continues to improve the reliability of this attainment data.
- Senior leaders have introduced classes to young people in S1-S4 to focus specifically on improving their literacy and numeracy. This time has been used to help support an increased number of young people to leave school with awards in literacy and numeracy. Senior and middle leaders should ensure that continued use of this additional time is well planned to support further improvements in young people's attainment.

### Leavers

- Most young people who left school in 2021/22 achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better in literacy. This has improved to be significantly higher than virtual comparator (VC). Less than half of young people left school with SCQF level 6 or better. This has improved to be in line with VC since 2020/21. The majority of young people with additional support needs who left school in 2021/22 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. A minority of young people with additional support needs left school with SCQF level 6 or better in literacy.
- The majority of young people left school with SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in 2021/22. This has improved to be in line with the VC since 2020/21. Less than half of young people left school with SCQF level 6 or better in numeracy. This has been in line with VC since 2019/20. Less than half of young people with additional support needs left school with SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in 2021/22. A few young people with additional support needs left school with SCQF level 6 or better in numeracy in 2021/22.

### Cohorts

- At S4, there has been an improvement over the last five years in those attaining SCQF level 5 or better. By S5 based on the S4 roll, there has been an improvement in those attaining SCQF level 6 over the last five years. At S4, by S5 and by S6 as a percentage of the S4 roll,



attainment for young people in literacy at SCQF levels 4 or better and 5 or better has generally been in line with VC for the last five years.

- At S4, attainment for young people in numeracy at SCQF levels 4 and 5 has improved to be in line with VC. In S5 as a percentage of the S4 roll, attainment for young people in numeracy at SCQF level 4 has declined to be significantly lower than VC in 2021/22 and significantly much lower than VC in 2022/23. The number of S5 learners achieving SCQF levels 5 or 6 or better has been sustained to be in line with VC for the last five years. The number of S6 learners achieving SCQF levels 5 or better or better has been sustained to be in line with VC for the last four years and SCQF level 6 for the last five years. Teachers should consider how to improve numeracy attainment at different levels and how targeted action can support more consistent improvement.
- Attainment in National 5 mathematics for all young people who were presented for the award has been significantly below the national average for the last two years. In 2022/23, a significantly higher number of young people in S4 were presented for National 5 applications of mathematics. Attainment in National 5 applications of mathematics for all young people who sat the exam has been broadly in line with the national average for the last five years, although A and A-B passes in 2021 and A passes in 2022 were significantly above the national average.

### **Attainment over time**

#### **Broad General Education**

- Almost all young people achieve third CfE level or better by the end of 2022/23 in all curriculum areas outwith literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Progression in these areas has been more robustly tracked by senior leaders from 2022/23 onwards, which now helps them to capture more effectively young people's progress and attainment. This should now be used to plan improvement. Senior leaders are also aware that there is room for improved rigour in staff's approaches to ensuring that assessment information is reliable. As a result, teachers are beginning to work on improved approaches to moderation. This should continue so that young people can benefit from more consistently reliable and robust assessment judgements by teachers.

#### **Senior phase**

- The average complementary tariff scores for the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of leavers have all improved to be in line with the VC in the latest few years.

#### **Cohorts**

- At S4, the average complementary tariff scores for the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% of young people are in line with the VC in 2022/23 and have been for the last five years. Attainment for the highest attaining 20% of young people has been in line with VC for four of the last five years, apart from 2020/21, when it was significantly lower than VC. By S5, as a percentage of S4, the lowest attaining 20% has been in line with VC. The middle attaining 60% has declined in 2022/23 to be significantly lower than VC and the highest attaining 20% has declined since 2021/22 to be significantly lower than VC. By S6, as a percentage of S4, the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% are all generally in line with VC.

#### **Breadth and depth**

- Senior leaders have strategically focused on improving outcomes for S4 in 2023/24. This has been supported by a more robust approach to presentation levels and to monitoring, tracking and interventions in the senior phase and has built upon work undertaken in the BGE. As a

result, there is early evidence of the impact of these approaches in improved outcomes for young people in S4. As a next step, senior leaders should consider how their approaches can be more rigorous. They need to ensure that this is extended to benefit all learners at all stages of the senior phase to improve the range and quality of passes.

- At S4, most young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better in 2022/23. This has declined to be significantly much lower than the VC in the last two years. The majority of young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better and one or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. This has been sustained to be broadly in line with VC for the last five years. A majority of young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. A minority achieved five or more awards at 5C or better, one or more at 5A or better and three or more at 5A or better. A few young people achieved five or more awards at 5A or better. This has improved to be in line with VC for these measures.
- By S5, the majority of young people achieved one or more awards and three or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better in 2022/23. A minority of young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better. The majority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better. A minority of young people achieved three or more awards and five or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better. This has declined to be significantly lower than VC. By S5, a minority of young people achieved one or more awards or three or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better in 2022/23. This has declined to be significantly lower than the VC. A few young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better in 2022/23. This has improved to be in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better in 2022/23. This has fallen to be significantly lower than the VC in the last two years. A few young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better. This has declined to be significantly lower than the VC in the last two years. A few young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better in 2022/23. This is broadly in line with the VC and this has been sustained for the last five years.
- By S6, a minority of young people achieved one or more awards or three or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better in 2022/23. This is broadly in line with the VC. A few young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better in 2022/23. This has declined to be significantly lower than the VC. A minority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better in 2022/23. This is broadly in line with the VC and has been for four of the last five years, except for 2020/21 when it was significantly higher. A few young people achieved three or more awards or five or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better in 2022/23. This is broadly in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better in 2022/23. This is broadly in line with the VC and has been for four of the last five years, except for 2020/21 when it was significantly higher. A few young people achieved three or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better in 2022/23. This is broadly in line with the VC and this has been sustained for the last five years.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievement**

- Young people are gaining skills and confidence through participation in the wider curriculum and through wider achievement activities. For example, a minority of young people attend the range of breakfast, lunch, after-school and study support school groups. On an annual basis, a significant number of young people develop their communication, problem solving and team working skills and achieve Saltire awards through delivering a popular pantomime. Young people demonstrate creative and problem-solving skills due to their work in school, regional and national events. This includes the Young Pathfinders programme, which also provides challenge and support for young people.

- Young people gain a wide range of skills through their work in a *Columba 1400* values-based learning programme. This helps them to be self-reflective, ambitious for their own futures and demonstrate working well with others and resilience. For a few young people, this is helping to significantly improve their attendance at school.
- Young people contribute very well to their school and communities through volunteering. For example, a few young people run the school breakfast club. A few young people support younger learners and those with additional support needs. A few young people contribute to the school's approach to support families by supporting family learning events such as the Monday evening cooking group. As a result of helping others, these young people have greater self-esteem and commitment to their own learning.
- Young people gain a range of awards to recognise their achievement. For example, a minority of young people are gaining national achievement awards. Around 70 young people are currently undertaking Duke of Edinburgh awards and a few young people have gained silver awards over the last five years. An increasing number of young people are gaining Saltire awards for their volunteering and a few young people have gained Leadership, Personal Development and Wellbeing Awards. Young people would benefit from staff, alongside partners, extending the range of awards that are available to recognise their achievements.
- School staff now need to work with partners to track young people's achievements and skills. This would support young people to better recognise their strengths and the areas they want to develop further. It would enable staff to measure the quality of achievements by young people and better identify those who are not participating. It would also support staff and partners to build on the skills young people are developing through achievement activities both within and out with school.
- Many individual achievements are celebrated well through newsletters, social media and conversations with staff. Those that gain awards at the annual awards ceremonies value them. However, there is a need to build on this to extend the number of young people whose achievements are fully recognised and celebrated.

### **Equity for all learners**

- PEF is directed towards actions focused mainly on supporting wellbeing and nurture. This includes the use of an engagement hub, the breakfast club and the pre-loved store. There is now a need for senior staff to track systematically the impact of PEF spend on improved attainment outcomes for young people, thus working to reduce the poverty related attainment gap.
- The majority of staff have a strong awareness of the profile of learners and better understand barriers to young people's engagement on an individual basis.
- Average complementary tariff scores for young people leaving school, who reside in SIMD decile one, were broadly in line with VC in 2021/22 and for three of the previous four years. In the same period, measures for leavers who reside in SIMD decile two were significantly lower or much lower than the VC in 2017/18, 2019/20 and 2021/22.
- School staff have an important focus on ensuring young people progress to a positive destination. To support this, staff have developed an effective programme of support for all learners when transitioning to post-school destinations. Staff work with partners in Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and a range of local organisations to provide a mixture of universal and targeted support. As a result of this focus, almost all young people entered a

positive destination upon leaving school. This has been sustained for the last five years. The majority of young people enter further or higher education.

## Other relevant evidence

- Young people do not have access to a school library or librarian as a result of a decision to remove this provision.
- School staff have developed an Active Travel partnership ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to develop cycle skills, cycle maintenance proficiency and access to bicycles. This provision has included securing specialised equipment for those learners where this is beneficial. As part of the wider curriculum offering, the active travel programme acts as means by which all young people can obtain equitable access to the equipment and skills necessary to source and use bikes for travel to and from school.

## Quality of provision of Special Unit

### Context

The Extended Additional Support Needs (EASN) faculty is situated in a wing of the main building of Alloa Academy. The faculty includes dedicated classrooms, hydrotherapy pool, sensory and common room and other spaces. Staff use all of these rooms to teach young people in a variety of settings. The roll is 34 young people split across 5 classes. All young people who attend the EASN faculty have a range of severe and complex additional support needs. The EASN faculty supports young people from across Clackmannanshire Council.

### Leadership of change

- Senior leaders have a clear vision for the EASN. They have established a culture of high aspirations based on continuous improvement. All staff have a clear understanding of each young person's additional support needs, including their socio-economic background.
- Senior leaders inspire staff to maintain their commitment to helping all young people to attain as best they can. The EASN faculty shares the school's values of respect, ambition and resilience. Staff support young people well to understand what these mean for them in ways, which are meaningful to them. Staff model the school's values well. This supports young people to understand their importance and how they help make the school a safe and enjoyable place in which to learn. Staff should continue with their plans to promote the school's values further within the curriculum.
- The EASN faculty improvement plan captures the current improvement priorities for the faculty accurately. Staff are involved fully in identifying areas for improvement. This supports them to have a clear understanding of how improvements will impact positively on young people's outcomes. Senior leaders should now consider how to include parents and partners more fully in identifying and taking forward improvement priorities.
- Staff actively seek opportunities to improve their work through professional learning. Senior leaders have created a culture where staff feel confident to suggest potential improvements and to take a lead role in taking these forward. Senior leaders prioritise improvements well. This supports the staff to initiate change at a manageable pace. This results in improvements beginning to become embedded in practice. Senior leaders have a good understanding of risks associated with change for the young people attending the EASN.
- Senior leaders support staff effectively to undertake leadership roles. These roles are beginning to lead to improvements in how people communicate and use digital technology. Staff seek out opportunities for professional learning relevant to their context. Senior leaders support them well to access these opportunities and share their learning with colleagues. A few teachers from mainstream classes have been supported to develop their skills in teaching young people with severe and complex needs. This has resulted in all young people attending the EASN being taught at some point each week by a subject specialist from the mainstream classes in the school. Moving forward, it will be important for senior leaders to continue to support all staff teaching in the EASN to continue to improve their practice. A few young people undertake leadership roles as prefects. They enjoy developing their sense of responsibility when undertaking their duties, such as helping to keep the common room tidy.

## Learning, teaching and assessment

- All staff develop very positive, caring relationships with young people. They have a good understanding of how best to communicate with each young person. They model friendly and supportive relationships. This helps young people to engage well in their learning. Young people enjoy their learning most when lessons are planned with topics of interest to them or involve learning in real-life contexts. Most lessons are appropriately challenging and matched well to most young people's needs. Teachers should now develop their practice so that young people's learning is more active. This should include considering how support assistants could be deployed more effectively to support young people's learning.
- The school's values underpin teaching well in most lessons. Teachers use the range of environments available in the EASN, wider school campus and local community effectively to enrich young people's learning experiences. Staff use communication aids, including signing, to support young people to understand what they are being asked to do. This helps young people to respond and communicate with others. Staff use praise regularly to support young people to know when they have done well. Mainstream teachers enhance young people's experiences in accessing learning in specialist areas such as modern languages or physical education. This includes being taught in classrooms in the mainstream building. This results in young people expanding their experience of curricular areas beyond those normally available in the EASN. Teachers are beginning to use digital technologies to enrich young people's learning experiences. These include interactive whiteboards and tablets.
- Young people are considered for attendance at the EASN faculty through robust multi-agency assessment and planning. This ensures that staff have quality information regarding each young person's individual support needs prior to attending the EASN faculty. Teachers are supported well to plan to meet young people's needs as they change over time. This is carried out through the use of regular multi-agency meetings, including with parents. Teachers observe young people each day and make adaptations to planned learning dependent on how well each young person is progressing. Teachers should now consider how approaches to assessment can be developed further to inform planned learning, which meets young needs more effectively.
- Teachers currently employ a range of processes for tracking and monitoring young people's progress. Senior leaders and teachers recognise there is a need to standardise these across the EASN faculty. This will support them to have a clearer picture of how well each young person is progressing.

## Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- The faculty's caring and nurturing ethos ensures young people know they are valued and cared for. Staff treat young people with high levels of dignity and respect. Young people know they are safe and that staff will always act in their best interests. Young people know they have adults in the school who they trust with whom they can speak to about matters personal to them. Young people are respected throughout the school community. This fosters their strong sense of belonging in the school. Staff understand the importance of young people's wellbeing and how this impacts on their progress. They are developing, where appropriate, young people's understanding of their own wellbeing and how they can contribute to this. For example, teaching them about which foods make up a healthy diet.
- Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to statutory duties. They undertake professional learning, which helps them to reflect on their practice. Young people's needs are captured well within their individual plans. These include targets appropriate for each young

person's needs. Teachers should consider how targets in young people's plans could detail more specifically the skills, which each young person is developing. This has the potential to support staff better to track how well young people are progressing against their individual targets. Teachers should consider how parents and, where appropriate, young people could be more involved in setting young people's targets.

- Young people in the EASN faculty are supported to access all areas of the school. This includes learning in mainstream classrooms, playing in the playground and having lunch in the school canteen alongside their peers. Young people are included in school events, such as end of term dances. They are represented on the school 'pupil parliament' where they are able to influence future developments in the school. Young people's learning experiences are enhanced by being taught by mainstream teachers. This supports young people to feel fully part of the whole school community at Alloa Academy.

## **Raising attainment and achievement**

- Teacher's assessment of young people's progress in the BGE is based upon information gathered from a range of tracking and monitoring tools. This data is not consistently accurate enough to assess how well young people are progressing in their learning. Teachers need to develop further their approaches to how they gather and analyse accurate information on young people's progress.
- All young people in the senior phase attain a range of personal achievement awards at National 1 or 2 level. A few attain national achievement awards at National 3 and 4. The number of national personal achievement awards attained has increased from 48 in session 2020-21 to 248 in session 2022-23. Senior leaders should consider how improved approaches to analysing young people's attainment throughout the BGE into the senior phase could continue to support overall improvements in young people's attainment. For example, consideration should be given to whether young people are capable of attaining at a higher level or attaining a wider range of awards.
- A few young people are beginning to develop a range of skills through their roles as prefects. This supports them to develop their confidence when representing the EASN faculty at whole school events. Staff celebrate young people's personal achievements regularly. This includes through whole school awards and the faculty's 'Wider Achievement Wall'. Teachers should continue with their plans to accredit young people's achievements using a wider range of nationally recognised awards.
- The school uses PEF to provide additional teaching staff in the mainstream classes. This additionality allows the school the flexibility to provide young people in the EASN faculty opportunities to be taught by mainstream teachers. This results in a few young people in the senior phase attaining personal achievement awards at National 3 and 4. Senior leaders now need to consider how this support is helping to accelerate the poverty related attainment gap.



## Practice worth sharing more widely

- There is a strategic and effective focus to ensure that young people who are care experienced are supported and are encouraged to thrive. Young people benefit from highly individualised plans as part of the staff's strong commitment to provide support for identified young people. This has resulted in improved patterns of engagement and attendance and has nurtured a sense of belonging to the school community. As a result, there is evidence of positive outcomes for care experienced young people. Staff at Alloa Academy and partners are advancing well the aspiration of meeting The Promise by supporting young people in this way.

## 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.