Summarised inspection findings

Baldragon Academy

Dundee City Council

13 June 2023

Key contextual information

School Name: Baldragon Academy
Council: Dundee City Council
SEED number: 5331137
Roll: 849 at September 2021

Baldragon Academy is a non-denominational secondary school, which is situated within Dundee City. The school links with four associated primary schools. The headteacher has been in post for approximately four years. He is supported by three full-time depute headteachers and one part-time depute headteacher. The school also has a business manager.

In February 2022 31.4% of pupils were registered for free school meals.
In September 2021 47.1% of pupils lived in 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.
In September 2021 the school reported that 39.9% of pupils had additional support needs.

Attendance was below the national average in 2021. Exclusions were below the national average in 2021.

A local authority Enhanced Support Area (ESA) is located within the school, led by a principal teacher. At present the ESA comprises 22 young people, with a diversity of needs.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	weak

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- In most lessons, positive relationships are evident between staff and young people. However, a significant minority of young people feel that they are not always treated with respect by staff or peers. In a significant number of lessons, disruption and disrespect from groups of disengaged young people affect adversely learners' experiences. Although almost all staff respond calmly, poor behaviour is not always challenged successfully by staff at all levels. All staff need to develop a more consistent and rigorous approach to promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct from young people.

- In a majority of lessons, young people lack enthusiasm and at times motivation for learning. This arises from lessons being overly teacher led and young people being too passive in their learning. Most young people, particularly in the Broad General Education (BGE), are not challenged sufficiently in lessons and the pace of learning is too slow. This leads to a minority of young people not engaging effectively. Too many lessons are disrupted as a result of young people's late coming or young people not maintaining regular attendance in class. This prevents teachers from being able to plan effectively to meet all individual needs and maximise learning time. Staff need to develop more consistently an improved culture of aspiration and ambition where all young people are supported and challenged to enable them to benefit well from their learning.

- Just over half of young people agree that they are given the opportunity to influence what and how they learn. Young people would benefit from well-considered opportunities that enable them to take more responsibility for their learning. This is especially evident in the BGE where young people experience few opportunities to lead their learning or to work collaboratively with peers.

- Teachers are beginning to share the purpose of lessons more consistently with young people. This is helping young people to understand the purpose of their learning more easily. A next step for all staff will be to involve young people more in understanding how to be more successful in their learning. Teachers should develop their use of plenaries to help all young people consolidate their learning and identify their progress.

- In the majority of lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. The majority of teachers use questioning to check understanding. They should develop their use of questioning to promote higher-order thinking skills and increase levels of challenge for all young people.

- Most staff offer verbal or written feedback to young people, however the quality of this is variable. In a few lessons, especially in the senior phase, teachers discuss young people's strengths and next steps through learning conversations or written feedback. Young people

value this. Senior leaders recognise the need for staff to develop further their approaches to sharing feedback with young people. This will help to ensure that all young people are aware of their individual areas for development and able to make appropriate progress in their learning.

- In a few classes, teachers use digital technology to support learning. Teachers should consider how to use digital technology more creatively to provide learning that is better matched to the needs of individuals.

- Senior leaders and staff are beginning to work well together, using the 'Baldragon Way', to improve learning and teaching. However, they should develop more robust plans that enable them to demonstrate these improvements throughout the school in a timely manner. They need to ensure that all staff develop and implement a shared understanding of what constitutes high quality learning and teaching.

- Teachers across the school are in the early stages of using a variety of assessment strategies. Teachers need to develop confidence in using a range of summative and formative assessment approaches to support young people and their families in having a deeper understanding of their learning. They also need to develop a shared understanding of how assessment should inform their planning of learning to meet the needs of young people.

- Most departments work with other schools in the local authority to understand standards in the senior phase. An increasing number of departments are involved in assessment activities at a national level to help develop a better understanding of standards and expectations. Staff are engaging increasingly in moderation activities in the BGE, mainly with staff from the associated primary schools to improve literacy standards. They should continue with their plans to use a broader range of assessments to improve the reliability of judgements.

- Staff have developed a tracking and monitoring system across the school. This system includes information gathered during regular monitoring points regarding young people's progress in all subjects and at all levels. The tracking and monitoring system includes information about identified additional support information for learners, where appropriate. Staff are using the tracking system effectively in a few departments to monitor the progress of young people. These departments are also using this information to inform planning, set targets for learners and ensure appropriate supports are in place for the most vulnerable young people.

- The majority of learners in the senior phase can identify where they have made progress across the curriculum and their next steps in their learning. Most young people in the BGE are unable to identify their level of working or their next steps in their learning. Teachers should develop more systematic approaches to sharing information about young people's progress with them. They should also ensure all young people and parents are clear about their next steps in learning. A more consistent, school-wide approach to the use of the tracking and monitoring system will ensure appropriate supports are in place for all young people.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

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

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	unsatisfactory

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

■ attainment in literacy and numeracy
■ attainment over time
■ overall quality of learners' achievement
■ equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy
BGE

■ Staff are engaging regularly in discussions and moderation activities within the school, especially linked to listening and talking. Senior leaders and staff are also engaging enthusiastically in moderation activities with colleagues from the local authority, including the school's associated primary schools. These activities are beginning to lead to an improved understanding of standards amongst all staff and a greater reliability in assessment decisions. Inspectors are not yet confident in the validity of all BGE assessment data.

■ In 2022, by the end of S3, almost all young people achieved third Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level or better in literacy and most young people achieved this level in numeracy. In 2022, by the end of S3, a minority of young people achieved fourth CfE level or better in literacy and the majority of young people achieved this level in numeracy.

Senior Phase
Literacy (leavers)

■ Most young people left school with Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better in literacy in most years from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The percentages of young people leaving with this qualification are often significantly lower or significantly much lower than the Virtual Comparator (VC). The majority of young people left school with SCQF level 5 or better in literacy from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The percentages of young people leaving with this qualification are also significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC in most years. A minority of young people left school with SCQF level 6 in literacy over the five years, which has improved to being in line with the VC from 2018-19 to 2020-21.

Numeracy (leavers)

■ Most young people left school with SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy from 2016-17 to 2020-21. This is generally in line with the VC. The majority of young people left school with SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy in two of the five years. The percentages of young people leaving with this qualification are significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC in most years and show no signs of improvement over the five-year period. A few young people left school with SCQF level 6 in numeracy over the five years, which is significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC.

■ To improve all leavers' opportunities of achieving literacy and numeracy qualifications, senior leaders and guidance teachers are beginning to target more effectively young people that are at risk of not achieving. They are putting in place a broader range of appropriate interventions, such as providing earlier one-to-one support. Staff are also continuing to review the courses and levels for which young people are presented.

■ Senior leaders and staff need to ensure more consistently that all young people attend and arrive on time for their classes. They also need to ensure that young people engage more effectively in learning and teaching. Improved attendance, timekeeping and engagement should improve young people's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy as well as more generally.

Literacy (cohorts)

■ In S4, the percentages of young people achieving SCQF level 5 or better are significantly lower than the VC in most years from 2017-18 to 2021-22. Otherwise, in S4, by S5 and by S6, the school's performance is generally in line with the VC over the same time-period, with a few exceptions. Usually, almost all young people leave school with SCQF level 5 or better in literacy if they remain at school until the end of S6.

Numeracy (cohorts)

■ In S4, by S5 and by S6, the school's performance is often significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC from 2017-18 to 2021-22, with a few exceptions. Positively, in S4, some improvement can be seen in the percentages of young people gaining SCQF level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better. By S6, the percentages of young people leaving school with SCQF level 6 in numeracy are significantly much lower than the VC over the five years.

Attainment over time

■ Senior leaders and staff are in the early stages of using a comprehensive school tracking and monitoring system. This highlights the levels at which young people are working in the Senior Phase. Staff in curriculum areas are also using a variety of tracking and monitoring systems to support them in developing a better overview of young people's attainment and progress over time.

BGE

■ Whilst senior leaders can demonstrate young people's attainment over time in literacy and numeracy, they are not yet able to do so across all curriculum areas. Senior leaders have identified correctly the need to continue developing a comprehensive BGE tracking system to inform appropriately aspirational levels of study for learners entering the Senior Phase. Staff should continue to develop effective approaches across the school to enable them to review regularly all young people's progress and provide appropriate, targeted support that meets their needs.

Senior Phase

■ When compared using average complementary tariff points, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people is often significantly lower than the VC from 2016-17 to 2020-21, including the latest year. There is a decline in attainment over the five-year period. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people is significantly much lower than the VC over the five years, with the exceptions of 2019-20 and 2020-21, when it improved to being in line with the VC. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people is significantly lower or much lower than the VC over the five years.

■ When compared using average complementary tariff points, in S4, from 2017-18 to 2021-22, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people is often significantly lower than the VC. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% and the highest attaining 20% of young people is significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC for the five years, with the exception of 2017-18.

■ During this same time-period, by S5 (based on S5), the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people is generally in line with the VC. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% of

young people is significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC in most years. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people is significantly much lower than the VC from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

- By S6 (based on S6), the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people is in line with the VC from 2019-20 to 2021-22. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% and the highest attaining 20% of young people is often significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC. There is no consistent pattern of improvement in the average complementary tariff scores in S4, by S5 and by S6 across all young people's attainment.

- The school presents young people for a range of SCQF qualifications, including skills for work courses and other awards, such as wellbeing awards. Young people gain valuable skills through these qualifications.

- In S4, at SCQF level 4 or better, a minority of young people gain six or more qualifications from 2017-18 to 2021-22, although the school is performing significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC in most years. At SCQF level 5C or better, the percentages of young people gaining 2 or more to 6 or more qualifications are significantly much lower than the VC from 2017-18 to 2021-22, with a couple of exceptions. At SCQF level 5A or better, the percentages of young people gaining two or more to six or more qualifications are significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC over the five years.

- By S5 (based on S5), at SCQF level 4 or better, the percentages of young people gaining two or more to six or more qualifications have declined from being in line with the VC in 2017-18 and 2018-19, to being significantly much lower than the VC from 2019-20 to 2021-22. At SCQF level 5C or better, a minority of young people gain four or more qualifications from 2017-18 to 2021-22. The percentages of young people gaining one or more to six or more qualifications are significantly much lower than the VC from 2017-18 to 2021-22, with a few exceptions. Similarly, at SCQF level 5A or better, the percentages of young people gaining one or more to six or more qualifications are significantly much lower than the VC over the five years. At SCQF level 6C or better and SCQF level 6A or better, the percentages of young people gaining one or more to four or more qualifications are significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC over the five years, with a few exceptions.

- By S6 (based on S6), at SCQF level 5C or better, the school performs significantly much lower than the VC from 2020-21 to 2021-22. The school often performs significantly much lower than the VC at SCQF level 5A or better from 2017-18 to 2021-22. At SCQF level 6C or better, the school also generally performs significantly much lower than the VC. At SCQF level 6A or better, a minority of young people gain one or more qualification.

- The school presents young people for a range of SCQF qualifications, including other Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) qualifications and those from providers other than the SQA. This includes skills for work courses and other awards, including employability awards.

- Senior leaders rightly recognise the need to develop further and implement more rigorously the school's presentation policy, especially for young people at S4. They also recognise the need for this policy to be more aspirational for young people. This would help these young people to have the best chances of success. Senior leaders should also continue to work regularly with all middle leaders and teachers to improve the quality of all young people's attainment across curriculum areas. Senior leaders and staff need to improve attainment as an immediate priority across the school, especially in S4, by S5 and by S6.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

■ Young people contribute to work linked to the school's aspiration to gain a silver award in the Rights Respecting Schools programme. They are also involved in work linked to the Youth Philanthropy Initiative and the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme. A few young people also participate in Baldragon Bike Academy and Baldragon Bee Academy. Young people also enjoy, and develop skills through, contributing to the local community in planned targeted initiatives and charity work.

■ The new School of Sport initiative has attracted a large number of young people. It is being used to develop young people's confidence and leadership, as well as their support for others, through their participation in basketball, swimming and football. A number of young people are also participating in a Rural Skills Group. This is helping them to develop skills in literacy and numeracy, and it is contributing positively to their wellbeing.

■ Senior leaders and staff are working well with a range of partners, for example staff from local colleges, Active Schools, Community Learning and Development and Young Carers, to develop the confidence and skills of young people. The school's well-established partnership with a coaching provider has positively enhanced the confidence and resilience of many young people.

■ Staff are at an early stage of tracking young people's achievements and are beginning to review these to determine any gaps and areas for skills development. Young people should reflect further on the strengths, skills and qualities they are developing from their achievements.

Equity for all learners.

■ Senior leaders and almost all staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural, and economic context of the school. This is helping them to provide caring and targeted support for individual young people and their families.

■ Nearly half of young people attending the school live in SIMD data zones 1 and 2. The average complementary tariff scores of school leavers living in data zone 1 have been significantly lower or significantly much lower than the national average from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The average complementary tariff scores of school leavers living in data zone 2 have been significantly lower than the national average in three of these years, including the latest year. Senior leaders need to increase the attainment of all young people, with an increased focus on those living in SIMD datazones 1 and 2.

■ Staff continue to use the school's Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) allocation to support initiatives that benefit young people, such as Baldragon Barista Academy, Baldragon Bee Academy, and Baldragon Bike Academy. The PEF has also been used to ensure increased equity for participants in the School of Sport initiative, through enhanced staffing and the provision of sports kit. There is scope now for the PEF to be used in a more systematic, targeted manner to impact positively on the attainment outcomes of individual and groups of young people.

■ Almost all young people leaving school from 2016-17 to 2020-21 moved to a positive destination, with the exception of 2017-18, when it was most young people. Generally, the majority of young people left school for further or higher education. Staff should continue in their efforts to identify early, and support all, young people that may be at risk of not moving to a positive destination.

Quality of provision of Special Unit (contributes to school evaluations)

Context
Almost all of Dundee City Council secondary schools have established Enhanced Support Areas (ESAs) in order to meet young people's diverse additional support needs. At present the ESA at Baldragon Academy comprises: 22 young people from S1 and S2, supported in two rooms (ESA 1 and ESA 2) by three teachers and five support staff. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in children with complex communication needs attending Baldragon Academy over the next few years.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

■ Caring relationships between staff and young people underpin the ethos in the Enhanced Support Areas. Staff model respectful relationships and treat each young person with dignity. Staff understand each young person's unique needs, supporting them to learn in an environment where they feel valued. Young people interact well in most situations. Staff need to raise their expectations of what young people are capable of and intervene more consistently to ensure that young people remain engaged in their learning. For example, challenging young people who are playing games on their mobile phones whilst in class. Teachers plan lessons, which build on young people's prior knowledge and identified additional support needs, sufficiently well. In most lessons young people's needs are met well. This helps to ensure most young people engage appropriately in their learning.

■ Most young people in the Enhanced Support Areas learn alongside their peers in mainstream classes appropriate to their needs. This supports them to feel included and make progress in their learning in a range of curricular areas. Teachers use the local community to enrich young people's learning. A minority of young people are motivated by regular visits to outdoor spaces for activities such as mountain biking and archery. These activities support young people to develop their social skills, confidence and understanding of risk. Teachers need to support young people better to develop their understanding of the skills they are learning when engaging in these activities. Teachers use learning intentions and success criteria appropriately to explain what young people will be learning. They now need to develop their skills further in using questioning to promote young people's curiosity and interest. Young people would benefit from increased opportunities to work in pairs and groups.

■ Initial multi-agency planning supports each young person to settle when first attending the school. Teachers in the Enhanced Support Areas assess each young person's abilities as they progress through the school. This supports them in planning to meet each young person's needs. This includes where young people would benefit from attending mainstream classes. Where appropriate a range of interventions are deployed to support young people address any gaps in their learning. Teachers should develop further their approaches to assessment to ensure all young people make improved progress in their learning.

■ Staff plan a BGE between the Enhanced Support Areas and mainstream classes for a majority of young people. Their planning for a minority of young people includes a significant proportion of outdoor interdisciplinary learning. Teachers need to ensure that outdoor interdisciplinary learning provides young people with opportunities to develop their skills across the eight curricular areas and four capacities of CfE.

■ Teachers track and monitor young people's progress on an ongoing basis. At present tracking is based mostly on assessment of classwork and anecdotal evidence of young people's progress. Teachers should develop further their approaches to tracking and monitoring to ensure they provide improved evidence of young people's progress. This should include exploring how individualised targets could evidence young people's progress.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement
Literacy and numeracy
- All young people in the Enhanced Support Areas are working within the BGE.

Numeracy
- A majority of young people can use a calendar to identify dates. They can use a clock to tell simple 12 and 24 hour times, using AM and PM appropriately. A majority of young people can multiply two numbers and use division to solve simple sharing problems. A minority of young people can estimate lengths using metres. Young people would benefit from increased opportunities to develop their numeracy skills in shape, position and movement and information handling.

Literacy
- A majority of young people can form words when playing games using letter grids. A few can use conjunctions to join clauses to form sentences. A few can identify clauses in sentences. A majority of young people listen well when they are read stories. They can answer questions related to the text. Young people would benefit from increased opportunities to develop their skills more explicitly in listening and talking.

Attainment over time
- Young people's attainment is evidenced in their classwork and jotters. Teachers need to develop approaches to assessing and tracking and monitoring young people's attainment. This will help to ensure that they provide a range of robust data, which captures young people's attainment reliably. This should include how well young people are attaining across all areas of the curriculum.

Overall quality of learners' achievement
- All young people in the Enhanced Support Areas are developing interpersonal and social skills. Almost all communicate well with their peers across the school. A few are developing their abilities to cope with learning in new and unfamiliar settings. Teachers should develop further their approaches to how they evidence, record and celebrate young people's achievements. This should include providing robust evidence of the impact of outdoor interdisciplinary learning.

Equity for all learners
- A majority of young people experience equity through accessing learning alongside their peers in mainstream classes. Teachers need to ensure that these opportunities are leading to improvements in young people's attainment and achievement.

Other relevant evidence

- The Young Mothers' Provision, housed within the school, supports young people that are pregnant from across Dundee City to continue their education with minimal disruption.

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.