

# Summarised inspection findings

**Turriff Academy**

Aberdeenshire Council

1 July 2025

## Key contextual information

School Name: Turriff Academy  
Council: Aberdeenshire Council  
SEED number: 5221234  
Roll (Sep 2023): 574 young people

Turriff Academy is a six year comprehensive secondary school serving a large, and predominantly rural area of Aberdeenshire. The school leadership team consists of two headteachers who job-share the role. One of the post-holders is permanent with the other on a secondment.

The number of young people who leave school before S6 is above the national average. Almost all young people reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation zones 5-8, with 13% of young people receiving free school meals. Attendance and exclusions are generally in line with national levels.

In 2024, 57% of young people were recorded as having an additional support need. This is substantially above national levels. Senior Leaders should continue to work with local authority colleagues to ensure the accuracy of this number.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

**weak**

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 headteachers led a positive review of the school vision, values and aims last year. They consulted widely with stakeholders as part of this review. This resulted in resilience and kindness being added to the existing values of respect, ambition and achievement. Staff are at the early stages of embedding these changes across the school. The vision, values and aims are not yet providing the school community with a unifying sense of direction or purpose. Senior leaders identify appropriately the need to continue to rationalise the school vision and aims to ensure these underpin all aspects of the life and work of the school. They have identified rightly the need to reflect better their commitment to children's rights. The headteachers recognise the need to strengthen the focus on staff being aspirational for all young people and secure improved learning experiences and attainment for all learners.
- The headteachers are committed to supporting and improving outcomes for young people and the school community. They have led staff through a range of initiatives to support much needed improvements. However, a significant minority of staff feel overwhelmed by the amount of change being undertaken across the school. Many of these changes lack a considered strategy as to how practice will be embedded fully, or how impact will be measured. Senior leaders cannot yet demonstrate and evidence the impact of key changes.
- The headteachers identify a number of challenges impacting on the pace of, and strategic planning for, change. These include significant work on the fabric of the building, staffing and

staff cover as well as a need to develop young people's social and relationship skills following the pandemic. Whilst these aspects have clearly impacted on the progress achieved, there is a significant need to develop strategic leadership at all levels of the school. This is particularly required to improve young people's wellbeing and provision for learners' additional support needs. Senior leaders and middle leaders now need to work more collaboratively with each other and staff to secure further improvements. The headteachers should continue to develop the school culture, ensuring it is built on transparency, open communication, respect and constructive challenge. There is a need to develop clear and consistent systems and practice to support all school leaders to strategically plan, implement and evaluate school improvements.

- Senior leaders work as a team positively and demonstrate that they know young people and families across the school very well. The headteachers reallocated senior leaders' strategic responsibilities this year to support their learning and development. The headteachers should provide senior leaders with more support as they develop confidence and skills in new roles.
- The school is coming to the end of a three-year school improvement plan (SIP) cycle. Departmental improvement plans (DIPs) align fully with the SIP and improvement priorities broadly reflect local and national priorities. Both the SIP and DIPs need to have a sharper focus on improving outcomes for young people. Senior and middle leaders should ensure that priorities are streamlined, and that they are clear and measurable. This includes developing more rigorous approaches to reviewing fully the progress of planned improvements. There is considerable scope to extend the role of parents, young people and partners in planning and evaluating improvement priorities. Senior leaders consult with the Parent Council who offer feedback on the SIP and Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) plans. Senior leaders should capitalise on the enthusiasm of the Parent Council to ensure they have a more proactive role in school improvement. For example, the Parent Council are keen to gather parents' views or lead on areas for improvement.
- Senior and middle leaders developed quality assurance calendars outlining activities undertaken in departments and at whole school level. These include reviewing attainment and progress data, sampling learners' work, conducting lesson observations or learning walks and gathering the views of young people. There are examples of strong practice in how this is used in a minority of faculty areas but it is inconsistent across the school. A minority of principal teachers demonstrate highly-effective strategic leadership of departments or improvement priorities. Senior leaders should work with middle leaders to ensure that the strongest practice of robust self-evaluation processes is in place across all faculties. It is important that this includes developing how Guidance and Additional Support for Learning (ASL) teams measure the impact of their work. Senior and middle leaders need to develop their own capacity to provide greater constructive challenge and review to one another and their departments to support improved standards further. Senior leaders need to use these next steps to support their confidence in the evidence base underpinning SIP priorities.
- Senior leaders prioritise appropriately the need to develop learning and teaching approaches to improve the quality of learners' experiences. A staff working group developed 'The Turriff Way' which has supported greater consistency of classroom routines across the school. Staff benefit from a helpful programme of professional learning around learning and teaching, delivered by staff, the local authority and partners. Groups of staff work together and engage with well-considered partners to explore pedagogy grounded in research and strong practice. This includes, for example, the use of project-based learning and approaches to develop young people's oracy skills. Senior leaders now need to develop a strategic approach to support teachers to share effective practice and ensure this is adopted by all staff. Staff need to

continue to look outwards to learn from effective practice adopted by schools in and beyond their local authority, and through educational research.

- Senior leaders encourage staff to develop their leadership capacity and a majority of staff are eager to adopt leadership roles. A few staff participate in a meaningful 'aspiring middle leaders' course offered by the local authority, enhancing their confidence in leading change. A few staff demonstrate strong leadership of important aspects of the school. For example, staff have successfully developed outdoor learning and 'Crew', an initiative in S1 and S2 to provide greater levels of personalised support. Senior leaders need to ensure all staff have opportunities to develop their leadership capacities. They should work with middle leaders to develop a consistent approach to teachers' professional review and development, which captures how staff plan to develop leadership skills.
- Young people are eager to offer ideas to support their school to improve, such as through providing feedback to departments or whole school surveys. A minority of young people report that the school listens to and takes their views into account when making changes. Staff need to consider how they demonstrate that young people's views influence change positively.
- A few young people in the senior phase have leadership roles such as sports committee members. They encourage peers to participate in sporting clubs and activities. A few young people are trained Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) and lead well-received lessons on gender-based violence and stereotypes. Groups of young people in S6 have departmental leadership roles, or are house and school captains to support younger peers. The newly established Junior Leadership Team is beginning to allow young people in S1–S4 to adopt meaningful leadership roles to identify how the school could improve. Senior leaders and staff need to increase opportunities for more young people to be involved in leading change across the school.
- Senior leaders and staff work well with key partners such as local colleges, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) leads. These partnerships help to support positive outcomes for young people. For example, young people undertaking college or Foundation Apprenticeship courses achieve well and use this experience to transition into positive post-school destinations. Staff use effective partners such as The Wood Foundation and Motivation, Commitment and Resilience (MCR) Pathways to enhance the delivery of the curriculum. Senior leaders are aware of the key areas for development in delivering a curriculum focused on meta-skills and employability. They are implementing programmes such as a skills profile and further development of learners' pathways following successful pilots in the broad general education (BGE).

## 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

- Most staff engage enthusiastically with young people and work very well to create a warm ethos across the school. This provides a calm climate for learning. In most lessons, young people benefit from positive relationships and interactions with staff. Young people appreciate the help and encouragement provided by teachers to support their learning. Almost all young people demonstrate positive behaviour in classes across the school. Most teachers use strategies effectively to address occasional low-level disruption from a few young people who are not focussed during learning.
- Most young people participate well during class activities. In a minority of lessons, teachers provide young people with rich contexts for learning. In these lessons, young people engage fully when working collaboratively with others, where they make effective use of digital technology, or when leading aspects of their learning. Young people would benefit from more regular opportunities to work in these ways. In a majority of lessons, young people are passive learners because activities are overly teacher directed. The majority of teachers need to increase the pace of learning and ensure all time in lessons is used purposefully. In the majority of lessons, a majority of young people complete tasks which do not provide appropriate levels of challenge for them. Teachers should continue to develop a range of relevant tasks and appropriately challenging activities to support all young people's progress and learning.
- Staff are developing their understanding of the features of high-quality learning and teaching. Senior and middle leaders should support and challenge teachers further to improve the consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the school.
- In most lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. While almost all teachers use starters to focus learners, the quality of these need to improve. Teachers need to ensure starters are not overly long and provide more challenge to motivate learners further.
- Almost all teachers share the purpose of learning and how young people can be successful in their learning. In the majority of lessons, learning intentions are overly task based, with success criteria linked to young people completing tasks. A few teachers have developed highly-effective approaches to sharing the purpose of learning and the measures of success for young people. A few teachers also support young people to co-create their success criteria. These practices should be shared more widely and embedded across the school. Teachers should develop their approaches to helping young people evaluate their progress and next steps in learning through plenaries.

- The majority of teachers use questioning regularly to encourage young people to participate in class, to recall prior learning or to check for understanding. Senior and middle leaders should build on the high-quality practice found in the few lessons whereby teachers use very effective questioning to support young people's higher order thinking skills.
- In a majority of lessons, staff use digital technology well to support young people with their learning. The majority of teachers share useful resources through digital platforms to support learning. Staff should continue to develop the creative use of digital technology to enhance the learning experiences of all young people.
- Almost all teachers demonstrate awareness of the needs of young people who require additional support with their learning, and the strategies required to support them. However, most teachers are at an early stage of ensuring lessons are planned carefully to take account of all learners' individual needs. There is a need for teachers to plan learning that meets the needs of all young people more effectively. In doing so, they should provide appropriately differentiated learning activities.
- Almost all teachers use summative assessment well to measure young people's progress across all stages. Most staff, supported by 'The Turriff Way' protocols, are continuing to embed formative assessment in lessons to assess young people's understanding. Senior leaders should support all staff to continue to develop their understanding of the aims and purpose of assessment. Staff need to make more robust judgements about learners' progress and better inform their planning for next steps in learning.
- Most staff provide helpful feedback to learners about their progress in learning and young people value the feedback they receive. Staff should continue to develop their approaches in offering consistently high-quality feedback to young people. They should ensure that feedback leads to all learners being clear about their next steps in learning.
- Almost all teachers have a strong understanding of national standards in the senior phase and are well supported by the significant number of staff who undertake work for the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). This allows teachers to make sound judgements about young people's progress and attainment.
- Staff in all faculties engage in helpful moderation activities with a minority moderating with partner schools successfully. In the BGE, approaches to assessment are too inconsistent and teachers do not have a shared understanding of achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. Senior and middle leaders now need to develop a shared understanding of the moderation cycle with all teachers. They should implement a school assessment policy that is well understood by all staff. Most middle leaders participate in local subject network groups to discuss and agree standards. They should continue to develop their approaches to moderation at all levels across the school and with colleagues across the local authority.
- Almost all staff use helpful learner conversations with young people in the senior phase. This is resulting in most young people in the senior phase knowing their target grade, whilst the majority of young people in the BGE can talk about their current working level. Currently, staff's approaches to learner conversations in the BGE are inconsistent and, as a result, not all young people are aware of their next steps in learning. Senior and middle leaders should develop

approaches to ensure these conversations are more effective and lead to appropriate interventions to raise attainment.

- All faculties track and monitor the progress of young people in the senior phase well. They are developing their approaches to tracking in the BGE and should ensure that this leads to accurate, holistic judgements about young people's progress. Teachers need to develop the reliability and validity of tracking data by developing further their understanding of national standards and use of robust assessment strategies. All departments have individual approaches to tracking young people's progress. Senior and middle leaders now need to develop their quality assurance of the data gathered. They need to ensure these individual systems are consistent in their quality and how this is used effectively to support learners. Senior leaders need to develop a clearer overview of the progress made by young people over time. They should use this information to support staff more effectively in planning appropriate and effective interventions for individuals and groups of learners.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Young people in the BGE learn across all curricular areas from S1 until the end of S3. Young people in S3 personalise their learning pathway through elective courses. Positively, the school has broadened the BGE curriculum in recent years. Young people benefit from regular timetabled opportunities for outdoor learning and skills development in S1 and S2. These help to develop young people's literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing (HWB), digital and meta-skills.
- Young people in the BGE receive their entitlement to religious and moral education (RME) and personal and social education (PSE) in line with national expectations. Most young people in the BGE receive their entitlement to two periods of high-quality physical education (PE). As a result of the allocation of time to Modern Languages in S1-3, young people are not receiving their full entitlement as part of the Language Learning in Scotland 1+2 approach.
- Young people in the senior phase benefit from a curriculum that includes in-person and online learning opportunities. Senior and middle leaders promote effectively vocational opportunities, including apprenticeships and college courses, and ensure they receive parity with school-based courses. Young people who require bespoke arrangements are accommodated well. This includes making arrangements with other settings to provide young people with a greater choice of courses and programmes. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that young people who attend courses at other settings have time and support to complete missed school work.
- Young people in P7 are supported with a well-received transition programme prior to starting in S1. This includes links between young people and the well-established links between secondary and primary staff, who provide inserts for the curricular transition. These activities support young people to feel confident about transitioning to Turriff Academy.
- A minority of young people in the senior phase benefit from a wide range of work placements. Staff should extend work placement opportunities to more young people to help them to develop skills for work, in line with the national guidance.
- The Pathways team, a group of staff and partners, work well together to provide well-considered support to young people at risk of not progressing to a positive post-school destination. In addition, they organise a wide range of experiences to develop employability skills across the curriculum. They are particularly successful in promoting links between subjects and appropriate employers. Local employers have supported young people well with open days, mock interviews, and work placements. The support through the Wood Foundation and DYW staff is developing workplace links for almost all areas of the curriculum.
- Staff from the library and an increasing number of departments, supported by young people, helped the school achieve a national reading award for schools. The library is a valued resource for study, lunch and breaktime clubs as well as a quiet space for young people to meet and reflect. A few young people influence the resources on offer, suited to their own areas of interest.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents value the approaches used by staff to communicate with families, such as through the weekly newsletter and social media platforms. This ensures parents are kept updated with school news and opportunities. These approaches also provide a regular forum for celebrating the successes of young people. Most parents feel comfortable approaching the school if they have a question, suggestion or have a problem that needs addressed. A few parents report being frustrated by the time taken by staff to respond to parental contact.
- Parents enjoy events that allow them to visit and participate in school activities. These include welcome events for parents of young people in S1 to meet teachers and find out about their child's learning. Staff recently offered two well-received parent workshops. These focused on helping young people's study routines for exams and the process of applying for post-school destinations.
- A support group for parents of young people with additional support needs meet regularly. This is a parent-led initiative offering parents the opportunity to share life experiences, access support from each other, and to engage with guest speakers involving partner agencies. This group also advocate for meaningful changes to the school to improve inclusive practice. This is an effective example of partnership working between families and school staff.
- Senior and middle leaders recognise the need to review and improve the role of the Parent Council. There is considerable scope to extend their involvement in quality assurance and school improvement. The Parent Council are eager to recruit more parents to ensure they are fully representative of the local community. They should consider how they can extend their engagement with the wider parent body further in aspects of school life.

## 2.1 Safeguarding

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

### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

weak

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

- Most staff are committed to supporting the wellbeing of young people. This results in the majority of young people feeling well supported by staff. Staff have focused appropriately on using positive relationships to encourage improvements in young people's behaviour. A significant minority of young people feel that other young people do not treat them fairly or with respect. Importantly, a significant number of young people also feel that staff do not treat them fairly or with respect. Staff need to develop further a culture of respect across the school. They should engage with young people and parents to work collaboratively to plan improvements.
- Guidance and ASL staff know their young people well. They are responsive to the pastoral needs of young people and demonstrate care and compassion. As a result, most young people recognise that they have an adult to speak to if they need support. Guidance and ASL teams work hard to provide a range of universal and targeted supports to help young people. However, there is a need to improve the strategic leadership of young people's wellbeing and support. Senior leaders need to work with Guidance and ASL teams to help them to evaluate the effectiveness of the universal and targeted support offered. This will help to ensure the improved wellbeing of young people can be evidenced clearly.
- Staff across the school are invested in the development of the Crew curriculum. This involves positive daily check-ins by teachers to small groups of learners. The majority of young people involved value how Crew develops their sense of belonging to the school community. Whilst Crew has indicators of positive outcomes, senior and middle leaders need to consider a stronger approach to evaluating the impact on cohorts and individual young people. Senior leaders need to develop a clear rationale for Crew and its place alongside the PSE and pastoral support systems.
- A majority of young people are not familiar with the wellbeing indicators and this language is not used consistently across the school. This results in young people struggling to articulate a clear understanding of their wellbeing. They are unable to describe their areas of strength and next steps in developing their wellbeing. Staff need to use the language of wellbeing more consistently to support young people to self-assess their wellbeing over time. They also need to use the wellbeing indicators in order to assess the needs of young people identified for targeted interventions and to evaluate the success of interventions.
- The quality and delivery of the PSE curriculum requires immediate action to impact positively on young people's wellbeing. It does not reflect national expectations and guidance, including the HWB experiences and outcomes. Young people's learning experiences in PSE are variable and often lack structure and depth. They are not experiencing learning about HWB that supports them to develop positive, healthy relationships with others or their emotional

resilience. Senior leaders and guidance staff now need to review the curriculum, seeking the views of young people to inform improvements. They should consider further opportunities for partners to contribute to the learning experiences planned. Staff need to develop a strategic overview of the PSE programme which demonstrates how young people will experience learning which is progressive and relevant to their lives.

- A minority of young people highlight bullying as an issue in the school. There is currently too much variability in how staff respond to bullying. It is important that senior and middle leaders work together with staff to improve their anti-bullying policy and procedures, considering the views of young people, staff, parents and partners. They need to develop the school community's shared understanding of bullying and how they can work together to address it. Currently, staff are not following national guidance fully. Staff need to review their arrangements for recording, monitoring and responding to incidents of bullying. This data should support staff to identify trends and patterns of bullying behaviour and work together positively to address them. This needs to result in all young people feeling more respected and valued.
- Staff require further support to develop their understanding of statutory duties relating to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Staff should improve their record keeping, particularly chronologies, to ensure they reflect national guidance. Staff need to improve their approaches to child's plans, implementing the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), and develop a consistent approach to monitoring attendance. Crucially, all staff need to consider how they meet the needs of learners with additional support needs better to comply fully with the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Act.
- There are important weaknesses in the planning for young people with additional support needs. Whilst the majority of these young people have appropriate plans in place, including Individualised Education Plans, the quality and consistency of planning is variable. There are young people accessing significant support who have no structured plans in place. Young people do not benefit from targets which are specific or measurable. Young people's plans do not detail the timescales for review and it is often unclear who is responsible for monitoring the progress of young people. Staff do not systematically record the views of young people and parents. Senior and middle leaders need to consider urgently their approaches to planning for young people with additional support needs. This needs to result in young people and parents understanding better the supports in place.
- Young people benefit from targeted interventions offered by a range of partners. This includes young people who are care experienced or those at risk of exclusion. A support group for care-experienced young people helps to improve their motivation and engagement for learning. Staff need to ensure all care-experienced young people are considered for a coordinated support plan with decisions systematically recorded and reviewed. There are less young people being excluded from school as a result of targeted approaches and interventions. As a next step, staff need to involve partners further in the planning and review of interventions to support young people. They should develop a staged intervention approach which is responsive to the holistic needs of individuals.
- Guidance staff monitor the attendance of young people monthly. There is not yet a consistent approach by staff in how they support young people to attend school. Senior leaders need to develop strengthened attendance procedures, in line with the local authority's policy, to improve how staff monitor and improve young people's attendance. Staff need to ensure timeously that young people are safe. Senior leaders identified appropriately the need to offer targeted support for a few young people who struggle to attend school regularly. They are

developing supports for young people to attain and feel included at school. As yet, interventions are not resulting in young people's attendance improving over time.

- A few young people attend school on part-time timetables. The planning and review procedures for these young people is inconsistent. Staff should review their procedures and rationale for young people on part-time timetables. They should ensure planning focuses on returning young people to full time education as soon as possible. This must involve regular review, with clear targets designed to address young people's barriers to attendance.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the local authority provider that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- A few young people participate in a proactive LGBTQI+ group and are supported very effectively by staff. The group have produced a well-considered podcast series as part of the Amity Equality group and this is featured on the LGBT Youth Scotland Website. Young people in this group raise the profile of their work by attending parent and primary-secondary transition evenings. Young people would appreciate the opportunity to influence the direction of the school's work on wider aspects of equality and diversity.
- There are limited opportunities for young people to explore issues of diversity, equality and discrimination across the curriculum. Staff should work together to identify further opportunities for young people to develop knowledge and skills through relevant and meaningful contexts. This needs to improve all young people's understanding of the protected characteristics and the importance of valuing and celebrating differences. As part of the required review of the PSE programme, staff need to provide valuable opportunities for young people to explore issues relating to equalities, the protected characteristics, ethnicity, sexual orientation and stereotypes.

### 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

##### BGE

- In 2023/24, by the end of S3, most young people achieved CfE third level and a minority attained CfE fourth level in literacy. Performance fluctuates over time and does not articulate well with the senior phase. In 2023/24, most young people achieved CfE third level and just over half of the cohort achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy by the end of S3. Young people's performance in fourth level numeracy decreases between 2021/22 and 2023/24 and is below national levels.
- Senior leaders recognise that further work is required to improve the accuracy of staff's professional judgements of young people's achievement of a level in the BGE.

#### Senior phase

##### Leavers

- Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, most young people who left school attained Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better in literacy. This was in line with the Virtual Comparator (VC) in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Performance at SCQF level 5 has decreased since 2020/21. A minority of young people achieve SCQF level 6 in literacy from 2019/20 to 2023/24. Performance at SCQF level 6 is consistent and has been in line with the VC from 2020/21 to 2023/24.
- Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, a majority of young people who left school achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, generally in line with the VC. In 2023/24, a few young people who left school attained SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This is significantly much lower than the VC. Young people's attainment at this level generally decreases from 2019/20 to 2023/24. It has been significantly lower or much lower than the VC in three out of five years from 2019/20 to 2023/24.
- Young people who require additional support with their learning left school with levels of literacy and numeracy qualifications at SCQF level 5 literacy and numeracy and level 6 literacy comparable with peers nationally. There are a few improvements in these measures. Performance at SCQF level 6 in numeracy is generally substantially below comparator schools and national levels.
- Staff have introduced a literacy strategy this session and plan to develop a numeracy strategy next session. Positively, staff target effective support to young people who are at risk of leaving school without a literacy or numeracy qualification. This results in almost all young people targeted through these interventions leaving school with a literacy and numeracy qualification.

## Cohorts

### Literacy

- At S4, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This has increased to being in line with the VC in 2023/24 from being significantly lower in 2022/23. Between 2019/20 and 2021/22, performance at this level was significantly higher than the VC.
- By S5, based on the S5 roll, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy in 2023/24. This is significantly much lower than the VC, having been significantly much higher than the VC in 2022/23. Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, almost all young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better, in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in four of the five year period from 2019/20 to 2023/24 which is significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC. In 2022/23, a majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6, in line with the VC. Staff need to improve the attainment of young people in S5 at SCQF level 5 and SCQF level 6.
- By S6, based on the S6 roll, almost all young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy from 2019/20 to 2022/23. In 2023/24, this increased to all young people achieving SCQF level 5. This is in line with the VC. Most young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy in 2022/23 and 2023/24, in line with the VC. This is an increase from a majority of young people from 2019/20 to 2021/22 which was significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC.

### Numeracy

- At S4, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy from 2019/20 to 2023/24, generally in line with the VC.
- By S5, based on the S5 roll, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy from 2021/22 to 2023/24. This is in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy in four of the five year period, from 2019/20 to 2023/24. This is in line with the VC in 2023/24, after being significantly much lower than the VC from 2020/21 to 2022/23.
- By S6, based on the S6 roll, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in four of the five year period from 2019/20 to 2023/24. There is no consistent patterns of improvement to this measure which was significantly lower than the VC in 2023/24. Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, a minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. With the exception of 2021/22, performance at this level is either significantly lower or significantly much lower than the VC.
- Young people's attainment in National Qualifications (NQs) in English and mathematics at National 5 and Higher level is generally in line with national levels, although it is declining. Entries and attainment for National 5 Applications of Mathematics are above national levels and staff plan to introduce this qualification at Higher level to offer young people more progression routes in the senior phase. Just under half of the cohort of young people in S4 were presented for two qualifications in Mathematics. This is much higher than the VC.

## Attainment over time

### BGE

- Senior leaders do not currently collate data on young people's achievement of a level by the end of S3. Senior leaders provided data from their reporting system which shows that between 2021 and 2024, most young people achieved CfE third level in the majority of curriculum areas by the end of S3. This data shows great variance across curricular areas and generally does

not articulate well with performance in the senior phase. Senior leaders recognise that further work is required to support staff to apply national standards confidently.

- Senior leaders should proceed with plans to develop a more effective and impactful approach to gathering a strategic overview of BGE data. This will allow them to analyse robust data more rigorously to measure young people's attainment over time.

### **Senior phase**

- Senior leaders should continue with plans to develop a rigorous strategic overview of young people's progress across the senior phase. They should consider how to use data effectively so that all young people are supported appropriately to make the best progress through the senior phase.

### **Leavers**

- The attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of school leavers is in line with the VC from 2020/21 to 2023/24. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people who left school has decreased from 2021/22 to 2023/24.
- The attainment of school leavers who require additional support with their learning has been increasing from 2021/22 to 2023/24. This was above the VC in 2023/24.

### **Cohorts**

- At S4, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people decreased from 2021/22 to 2023/24 but remains in line with the VC. Senior leaders target appropriately the need to improve the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people. Their attainment was significantly lower than the VC in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2022/23. Positively, it increased to being in line with the VC in 2023/24. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people is in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2023/24, apart from 2020/21 when it was significantly lower than the VC.
- By S5, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people is in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2023/24. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people has been in line with the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24, having been significantly much lower than the VC in 2019/20 to 2021/22. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people has been significantly much lower than the VC between 2019/20 and 2023/24, with the exception of 2022/23 when it was in line with the VC.
- By S6, attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people is in line with the VC from 2020/21 to 2023/24. The performance of the lowest attaining 20% has been improving from 2020/21 to 2023/24.

### **Breadth and Depth**

- Middle leaders need to take more effective steps to improve young people's attainment across the majority of faculties. This includes increasing pass rates and supporting young people to complete courses.
- Senior leaders and staff are increasing the range of opportunities available to young people beyond NQs to improve learning pathways through the senior phase. This is leading to a few young people gaining a greater number of awards. It is important that senior leaders continue to review the senior phase offer. They should ensure young people undertake the most progressive and aspirational range and level of courses.

- At S4, a majority of young people achieve three or more courses at SCQF level 5 or better between 2019/20 and 2023/24. A minority of young people achieve five or more courses at SCQF level 5 or better in the same period. This was significantly lower than the VC in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2022/23 and increased to being in line with the VC in 2023/24. The percentage of young people gaining three or more to six or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better has increased from 2020/21 to 2023/24. This is in line with the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- By S5, as a percentage of the S5 roll, a minority of young people achieve two or more to four or more courses and a few young people achieve five or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better. Generally, this is significantly lower or much lower than the VC between 2019/20 and 2023/24, with the exception of 2022/23 when it was in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieve one or more award at SCQF level 6A or better. This moved from being significantly much lower than the VC in 2019/20 to 2021/22, to being in line with the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- By S6, generally around half of the cohort achieve four or more courses at SCQF level 6C or better from 2020/21 to 2023/24. This is in line with the VC. The number of young people attaining three or more to five or more courses at SCQF level 6A has decreased from 2021/22 to 2023/24. This is in line with the VC, apart from three or more awards and five or more awards in 2023/24, which is significantly much lower than the VC. A minority of young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better from 2019/20 to 2023/24. This is in line with the VC.

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

- The majority of young people achieve very well through participation in a wide range of curricular activities beyond the classroom and community groups. Young people develop skills such as communication and teamwork, and build social networks through these activities. A few young people gain national success. This includes, for example, young people in the two Formula One groups who won national competitions, and are finalists at the UK event. These young people increase their confidence to present and problem solve, as well as develop a greater ambition for future career pathways. An increasing number of young people enjoy success through participation and engagement in sporting activities and events such as around a fifth of the school participating in the Swimming Gala. Young people develop performance skills and confidence through delivering school shows such as a recent pantomime.
- Young people develop important citizenship and leadership skills by contributing to their school and community. This includes young people in the senior phase who participate in MVP and present to their peers in S1, extending both their own and others' knowledge effectively. A few young people are play leaders and apply their knowledge and skills by delivering well-received activities in local primary schools.
- A substantial minority of young people gain national achievement awards. In 2022/23 and 2023/24, almost all young people gained the John Muir Award recognising their conservation skills. A few young people in S4 – S6 gain leadership awards. Others complete programmes successfully, including the Duke of Edinburgh's award, through community-based groups and uniformed organisations. Staff should continue to work with partners to explore further opportunities for young people to receive accreditation as a next step.
- Young people's achievements, where these are known to staff, are celebrated well through social media, newsletters, on noticeboards and through award ceremonies and school certificates. Senior leaders need to continue to develop approaches to capture and celebrate

all young people's achievements, including aspects like caring for others and skills gained from part-time work.

- Senior leaders are at an early stage of tracking young people's participation in activities and current data does not include all young people's achievements. Senior leaders are exploring how barriers such as socio-economic disadvantage are impacting on young people's achievement. Young people would benefit from staff working with partners to progress their plans to combine and enhance their current tracking of skills and achievements. Staff and partners need to identify and support young people not participating in activities.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The majority of staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school. Staff and members of the local community have taken positive steps to support young people sensitively to participate more fully in the life of the school. This includes the 'Turriff Necessities', a provision of stationery supplies in classrooms and access to recycled uniforms. Young people who face barriers to participation because of costs associated with school trips, receive assistance, including support from the local authority. This is improving participation of young people in the life of the school. Senior leaders need to take further steps to reduce further any costs of the school day. This includes plans to move to a cash-free provision to remove any potential negative stigma for young people entitled to free school meals.
- Staff in the pathways group work proactively with a wide range of impactful partnerships. This supports young people's participation in important opportunities such as attending university aspiration events. Staff should develop approaches to monitor the impact of these interventions on improving participation for all young people.
- Staff track the progress of young people who face additional barriers to attaining well because of their circumstances such as being care-experienced or having an additional support need. Senior leaders are aware that the attainment of young people who receive free school meals requires significant improvement. They should proceed with plans to monitor and accelerate progress for this group, closing the poverty-related attainment gap, in line with national expectations.
- Almost all young people who left school in 2023/24 progressed to an initial positive destination on leaving school, in line with the VC. The number of young people progressing to an initial positive destination increased from 2022/23 when it was significantly much lower than the VC. Senior leaders responded promptly and effectively to this decrease by establishing an effective pathways team of staff and partners. Staff have strong links with a range of college and university partners which is supporting young people very well with post-school transitions. Staff also ensure that young people are supported in transitions such as through MCR pathways.

## 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.