

Summarised inspection findings

Cults Academy

Aberdeen City Council

21 May 2019

School Name Cults Academy
Council: Aberdeen City Council
SEED number: 5235839
Roll (Sep 2017): 980

Attendance is generally above the national average.

In February 2018, 2.8 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals which is significantly below the national average.

In September 2017, 0.1 per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland, 72.8% live in the 20% least deprived data zones.

In September 2017, the school reported that 15 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

Key contextual information

The headteacher was recently appointed, taking up post in January 2019.

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 working well with all stakeholders to continue to drive school improvement. He is doing this in a measured and consultative way. He recognises the range of good-quality work which has taken place over recent years, and which is currently taking place. However, he has also identified key aspects of development which need to be addressed swiftly to enhance young people's learning experiences. These include an enhanced focus on providing consistently high-quality, motivating learning and teaching across all subject areas and the design of a whole-school framework for Developing the Young Workforce (DYW). This will broaden the understanding of all young people in relation to the world of work and help them to make more informed decisions about future learning and progression.
- The school's vision, values and aims have been in place for a number of years. They are evident in the life and work of the school, and displayed throughout the building. The new headteacher, in consultation with all members of the community, has started a process to revise the vision and values. This is to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose and meet the needs of the current school community well. Early work on rebranding the vision and values has started with senior leaders seeking the views of staff. They plan to work with young people, parents and partners over the coming months. Moving forward, it will be important to align the new school vision and values with the work of the Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) group. This group has worked successfully and collaboratively with all stakeholders to identify five core rights. Young people and staff promote widely the rights identified on the Rights Respecting Charter.
- Young people value being consulted on their views, particularly in relation to how change is led in the school. They appreciate when they receive meaningful feedback on their views or when they influence positive change in the school. They would benefit considerably from being given more opportunities to share their views regularly, perhaps through focus groups or school improvement groups which could be led by young people. Senior leaders have already engaged in dialogue with staff and young people to consider different ways in which pupil voice can be developed over the coming months.
- Moving forward, senior leaders recognise that school and faculty improvement planning processes need to be based on the identification of well-judged aspects of improvement which link closely with the school's own evaluation of its work. Working alongside staff, senior leaders will revise the school improvement plan over the coming months. This should identify key areas of responsibility and timelines to help relevant staff ensure that the plans are implemented timeously.
- The headteacher also plans to strengthen the culture of self-evaluation in the school. This will enable all young people, staff, parents and partners to reflect more regularly on, and articulate, the quality of the school's work. It will also empower them to contribute more effectively to

school improvement. Faculty principal teachers should continue to engage in self-evaluation activities in their faculties, such as working with staff on the analysis of exam data and carrying out regular classroom observations. These are helping them to ensure that learning experiences for young people are of a consistently high quality. Ongoing evaluation activities in relation to pupil support and support for learning are leading to notable improvements in practice in these areas.

- Faculty principal teachers manage and lead their faculties well to support young people to achieve. They have high expectations of their staff. They enjoy working together to share practice, both in and outwith the school with subject-network colleagues. However, senior leaders now need to provide stronger guidance to them in taking forward key initiatives across the school in a more structured and consistent way. There is also scope for the skills of all principal teachers, and teachers more widely, to continue to be developed and used more effectively to impact positively on leading change in the school.
- Staff engage in a variety of professional learning. This is helping them to develop their knowledge and skills, reflect more regularly on their practice, and improve learning and teaching in their classrooms. They benefit from a range of in-house provision, delivered by staff during in-service and twilight sessions, higher education modules, and leadership programmes which are facilitated by the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL). A few staff are leading whole-school groups, such as a teacher learning community (TLC).
- Young people, particularly those at S6, engage in leadership opportunities across the school. These include them becoming house captains, and taking on a variety of responsibilities at break times and lunchtimes to support staff and younger pupils. Young people from S4 to S6 engage in whole-school activities, such as working with staff to lead the new wellbeing and equalities group. They are also working hard to try to achieve the Rights Respecting Schools gold award. A few young people at S3 and S4 are developing their leadership and team-working skills by participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. There is considerable scope for the school to increase the range of opportunities which exist for young people to develop their leadership skills and confidence.
- Senior leaders have used the school's Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) allocation appropriately to improve the learning experiences and progress of a few young people. This has led to young people accessing their learning more easily through new resources. It has also been used to promote initiatives which have supported young people in improving their attendance and being more successful in their learning and achievement.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

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

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

- There is a calm, purposeful and supportive ethos and a positive climate for learning across all areas of the school. Expectations are high and there is a strong work ethic. Positive relationships are evident. Young people interact respectfully with each other and with staff. The school's vision and values and the current Cults Academy Rights Respecting Charter provide a clear foundation for this. Senior leaders' plan to collaborate with the wider community to revisit the vision and values in the coming months. Work is on-going to help young people, staff and other members of the school community explore their rights and responsibilities. The school has achieved the RRS Silver award and is working towards Gold. Young people and staff are proud of their school. Young people value the high aspirations staff have for them and the support and encouragement provided for them to achieve.
- Almost all young people participate readily in their lessons and respond diligently to teacher instructions. They are clear about the purpose of their learning. Teachers support this in a variety of ways, including sharing what is to be learned at the start of lessons or a series of lessons and making explicit links with prior and future learning.
- Young people enjoy learning actively and being given opportunities to lead learning for themselves and others. They engage most eagerly in tasks and activities when the pace is brisk and learning is consistently challenging and well matched to their needs and interests. However this is not yet consistent across the school. Almost all young people's engagement with learning has been enhanced by the school's introduction of a new digital learning platform. At faculty level, most young people have opportunities to influence how and what they learn. Senior leaders should work with teachers to ensure that this effective practice is shared and adopted more consistently across the school.
- Almost all teachers' explanations and instructions are clear and helpful. In a few classes where learning is mostly teacher led, young people have limited opportunities to take an active or leading role in their learning or to engage in independent or collaborative practice. In a few lessons teachers used skilful questioning to promote higher-order thinking and successfully increase the challenge and depth of learning. There is scope for staff across the school to develop their use of questioning techniques to ensure young people have more consistent opportunities to experience increased challenge in their learning. Young people in S1 to S3 in particular would benefit from being given more opportunities to develop their responses to questions and to build on each other's answers.
- Teachers use a variety of feedback approaches to support young people to improve. This includes written, verbal, and, increasingly, digital feedback. Young people particularly value feedback that is personalised, clearly defines what they need to do to be successful and includes next steps to enable them to achieve their learning targets. Most young people in S1 to S3 are able to describe the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level at which they are working

and what they need to do to improve. In some faculties, feedback from young people is used to improve courses and programmes to better meet their needs and interests. Increased use of high quality plenary sessions and learning conversations by teachers would help young people to reflect on and understand their learning during lessons and further maximise their success.

- Across the school, learning is enhanced by skilful and creative use of digital technologies by staff and young people. This includes using a variety of software, on-line and social media resources. The school's new digital platform is increasing access to learning for young people, including any who are unable to attend school for a variety of reasons. It supports learners to work collaboratively, submit assignments and create and share their own resources digitally. Staff are continuing to extend their knowledge, understanding and application of digital technology through professional learning. Increasingly, they are making use of it to gather young people's views about their learning, to give immediate and personalised feedback and to differentiate tasks and activities. Young people's enjoyment and engagement in learning are further promoted as a result. Digital learning is a strength in the school.
- Senior leaders are keen to increase the focus on high quality learning and teaching across the school, building on work already undertaken and the effective practice in place. This includes developing a shared understanding of very good learning and teaching through refreshing the school policy. They should also continue with plans to review the programmes of professional learning and approaches to learning visits to ensure they align fully with key aspects identified for improvement.
- In lessons, teachers employ a variety of approaches to assess progress, including peer and self-assessment tasks and activities. These are helping young people to reflect on and analyse their learning and are used by teachers to inform their planning of future learning and assessment. Staff are also making increasing use of the National Benchmarks to plan learning and ensure a shared understanding of the standards young people should achieve at the different CfE levels. All staff have taken part in professional learning on assessment and moderation in the broad general education (BGE) at faculty, school and local network levels. Further work on moderating standards and young people's progress in literacy and numeracy is planned with associated primary schools. These activities are increasing teacher's confidence in their understanding of standards in the BGE and helping to make their professional judgements about progress more robust and reliable. There is scope for effective assessment and moderation practice in some faculties to be shared more widely across the school.
- In the senior phase, teachers have a very good understanding of assessment standards in National Qualifications which they use to set aspirational targets with young people and plan learning that supports them to achieve these. This understanding is developed through faculty and subject moderation activities, the sharing of standards by those who undertake Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) duties and participation in professional learning events.
- Faculties have developed a range of approaches to record on-going assessment and monitor young people's progress. In the senior phase this includes monitoring of young people's target and working grades. Progress with these is also monitored at faculty and house meetings. This enables staff to identify earlier where interventions are required and put support in place to enable young people to succeed in their National Qualifications and other qualifications. In addition, young people from S1 to S6 have learning conversations with their tutors prior to the issue of reports to parents. Young people in focus groups speak positively about these opportunities to reflect on their progress and next steps in learning.

- In addition to the regular information provided to parents about young people's progress in learning, staff can now use electronic learning updates to communicate with them. Through these updates, they communicate about aspects of learner progress, any interventions put in place, concerns or young people's successes. Improvements to communication with parents are leading to increased engagement with them about young people's progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Senior leaders recognise the curriculum as a key driver for improving young people's attainment and achievement. Through the range of experiences offered almost all young people experience a broad curriculum from S1 to S3 which reflects the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. Staff in all areas of the school are aware of the need to promote inclusion and equity, ensuring a range of experiences and awards appropriate to most young people.
- In the broad general education young people are provided with appropriate learning opportunities covering all curricular areas in S1 and S2. In addition they have opportunities to reflect and develop their skills through religious and moral education (RME), physical education (PE), personal and social education (PSE) and personal learning planning. In S3 young people welcome the opportunity to personalise their curriculum at various points in the year in social studies, expressive arts, technologies and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders need to continue to ensure that, by offering this degree of personalisation and choice, young people are not limiting their options as they enter the senior phase.
- At the end of S3 young people complete a comprehensive learning profile capturing their wider achievements, academic attainment and employability skills related to each curricular area. In addition they are encouraged to reflect on their learning journey by writing a personal statement and to consider planning for their future. Young people are not yet able to make connections between this and subject choices which is limiting the opportunities for them to make informed decisions about future pathways. There are missed opportunities to work more closely with the Developing Young Workforce (DYW) agenda and better utilise the My World of Work (MyWOW) resource.
- There are a few good examples of learning beyond subject boundaries in Cults Academy with young people being encouraged to view learning in different contexts, for example outdoors. Senior leaders acknowledge that young people, particularly in the broad general education, would benefit from more regular opportunities to experience interdisciplinary learning and outdoor learning in a wider range of curricular areas.
- Teachers in the English and mathematics faculties lead the teaching and assessment of literacy and numeracy across the school. Joint assessment and moderation activities are planned with colleagues from primary schools to further develop their understanding and confidence in making professional judgements. Staff should now build on their earlier work in literacy and numeracy, and current work on skills in the school, to refresh and further enhance their understanding and expertise in delivering literacy and numeracy as a responsibility of all.
- The school library provides young people with a wide range of literature in an attractive and welcoming environment. A creative range of activities is in place to promote reading for enjoyment. This has increased young people's engagement with reading across the school. As a resource, the library is well used by almost all faculties to enhance young people's learning. Young people also use this resource well to work independently.
- There is a comprehensive programme in place to support young people make choices regarding areas of study. Parents are invited to presentations in school and class teachers inform young people of their options through tracking and follow up learning conversations. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) coaching staff support the PSE programme and young people themselves have individual interviews with pupil support teachers. Senior leaders

should ensure that all young people, and their parents, are fully aware of the broad range of pathways available in and beyond school to support them in making informed choices.

- The implementation of both the Career Education Standard (CES) and Work Placement Standard (WPS) are at a very early stage. Senior leaders have recognised this and are putting in place plans to develop a strategy for the delivery of these entitlements and to build staff capacity. There are examples of skills leading to employment being developed but this is not yet consistent across the curriculum. As a result of this, young people are not able to make connections or articulate clearly their career management skills.
- Young people in the senior phase are encouraged to plan their learning over one, two or three year periods and are invited to fill a 'basket' of qualifications at whatever pace and level is appropriate for them. Young people in S4, 5 and 6 are timetabled together where appropriate, meaning that in a number of classes, for example those studying at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5, there are young people from each of the three year groups. As a result there is increasing flexibility for individualised pathways and a suite of courses at different levels to be taken by all young people in the senior phase.
- In S4 young people successfully work towards and are accredited with, appropriate unit awards in both PE and RME. Young people in S5 and S6 are not currently experiencing learning in RME in line with statutory guidance.
- In S4 all young people study six courses leading to National Qualifications, two of which are English and mathematics. For most young people these courses are at SCQF level 5. A few young people are supported to follow flexible pathways which for some includes work experience or courses with North East College. A few young people are given the opportunity to study at SCQF level 6 in S4. Staff recognise that there is scope to increase awareness of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework in order to consider a wider range of qualifications and other learning experiences for a few young people.
- In S5 almost all young people study five courses. This may be all, or a mixture of, SCQF level 5 and 6 courses. For a few young people, S5 will include additional opportunities offered through, for example, the city campus consortium arrangements. A very small number of young people in the senior phase are following Foundation Apprenticeships which offer work-based learning opportunities.
- In S6 most young people study three or four courses from a range of levels including SCQF level 6 and 7. The school offers a commendably wide range of courses, in almost all curricular areas, leading to awards at SCQF level 7 in Advanced Higher. A large number of young people are successful at this level. A few young people in S6 engage with the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS) which gives them an opportunity to study an Open University module alongside their other studies.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Senior leaders communicate with parents effectively through social media and other more traditional methods. Parent contact evenings with teaching staff and workshops, for example to explain new digital ways of learning, are well attended. A recently introduced weekly update from the headteacher is shared with parents. This gives them helpful information about the school. The majority of parents feel that they receive helpful, regular feedback about how their child is developing in school and this has been further enhanced by the addition of 'learning updates' from teachers. Parents appreciate these new ways of sharing general information and the many successes of young people.
- Most parents feel that their child is making good progress at the school. They are not always aware of the next steps in learning for their child. Parents would appreciate more advice on how to support their child's learning at home. Further development of digital platforms, an example of which is well-used and informative in the classroom, could provide a vehicle to further support this.
- The Parent Council recognises that it is not yet fully representative of all parents of Cults Academy. Increasing parental involvement through recent focus groups is encouraging more parents to become involved in suggesting improvements for the school. Involving the Parent Council more fully in, for example, developing the school improvement plan or contributing to school self-evaluation, will help develop the role of parents as partners in their child's education and be beneficial for all concerned. Parent Council members are keen to develop a professional directory of parents willing to offer their professional experience to support a school programme around developing skills for learning, life and work. An active Parent Teacher Association supports fundraising activities to purchase equipment for the school and to support events, which benefit young people.
- Cults Partnership Group provides a useful mechanism for public service partners to work together to address some key issues they have identified in the school catchment area. The current focus is children and young people's mental health and resilience. Work includes expanding relevant professional development. There is scope to explore how this partnership could include community, faith and third sector organisations in order to extend the offer.

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

- All staff have a shared understanding of their individual and collective responsibilities for wellbeing, which is improving outcomes for almost all young people. They recognise that wellbeing underpins learners' ability to achieve success. Faculties take account of the wellbeing indicators in the delivery of the curriculum, and young people have regular opportunities to reflect on their understanding of wellbeing in PSE. Pupil support teachers are making effective use of wellbeing wheels and other periodic surveys to assess young people's wellbeing, and provide additional support when required. For example, a resilience group set up following concerns highlighted in a survey last session improved the confidence of those involved in dealing with stressful situations. Targeted support enabled a few young people, who were identified as not being active, to take up sporting activities. The school is now well placed to support all young people to use their knowledge of the indicators to take more responsibility for their own wellbeing.
- Caring and positive relationships are evident across the school community and young people benefit from a very calm environment for learning. Almost all young people demonstrate respect through their interactions with staff and their peers. Commitment to the importance of relationships is evident in the pupil support structure, which ensures that all young people have daily contact with their class tutor. Principal Teachers of Pupil Support know their caseload very well and have weekly contact teaching them PSE. As a result, most young people feel safe and have someone they can talk to if they have concerns or worries. Behaviour across the school is calm, young people are very polite and exclusions are low. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop universal support further. For example, we have discussed how to build on the good work of the tutor groups by developing peer support opportunities for young people at all stages in the school.
- Young people are learning about health and wellbeing across the curriculum, and an extensive range of clubs and activities support young people's mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. For example, young people are able to talk knowledgeably about relationships and sexual health, building on what they learned at primary school. A focus on substance misuse last session has led to a reduction in vaping incidents in school. Young people are also encouraged to eat healthily, and the Tea House Café project is increasing learners' knowledge about nutrition. The impact of the PSE programme is evaluated on a regular basis and changes made as a result. This very good practice should continue to ensure on-going progression and relevance for all young people. We have discussed with teachers how they can now involve young people more in the planning and delivery of PSE across all stages of the school.
- Senior leaders and pupil support teachers have a very good understanding of statutory requirements and comply with codes of practice. Policies are up-to-date and refer to recent

guidance. Useful information is provided to teachers to help them to meet the needs of learners in class. Almost all young people, including those with additional support needs, care experienced learners and young carers, are included with their peers for their learning. Pupil support staff demonstrate a strong understanding of young people and their individual needs. They work very well with each other and with partners to provide effective targeted support for almost all young people who require it.

- Almost all young people with additional support needs attain and achieve very well. Most support plans include relevant targets for learners, and include the views of young people and their parents. A few plans would benefit from having more specific short term targets, which all staff and young people should be familiar with. Partner agencies would welcome involvement in strategic discussions about approaches to meeting learners' needs. For example, reflecting on the recent success of the Dynamic Youth project, which has improved young people's ability to cooperate with others, and an outdoor learning project which has improved attendance for a few learners. Whilst almost all young people's attendance is very good, senior leaders recognise that further work is required to support a few learners to attend school. Pupil support teachers should also continue to monitor and review all flexible packages of support to ensure timeous return to full-time education. As planned, staff should continue to develop approaches to supporting young people's emotional wellbeing.
- A very active steering group, led by young people from across all stages of the school, is currently working towards a gold Rights Respecting School (RSS) standard. Young people chose five articles of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as a focus at Cults. RRS ambassadors have been very active in promoting these rights across the school community through a video, leaflets and social media. The group also create quizzes for use in tutor groups, and performed the 'Twelve Rights of Christmas' at a concert in December. As a result of this work, young people and staff across the school have a very good understanding of rights. Almost all feel they are treated with respect, and in a fair and just manner. Across the school, further work is now required to ensure that all learners are active participants in the life of the school community.
- Commendably, young people have also taken a lead in taking forward the work of a wellbeing and equalities group, focusing on areas related to protected characteristics. This arose from the school responding to the concerns of a few young people about how they were being treated by others. Whilst the wellbeing and equalities group is at a very early stage, it is already showing signs of having a positive impact. For example, accessible toilet signage has been improved, and training is being planned for staff, using questions from How Good is OUR School? As work to review the vision and values progresses, ensuring there is a shared understanding of the dignity and worth of every individual, regardless of difference, will be a key aspect of the work. Senior leaders should continue to monitor and evaluate approaches to valuing and celebrating equality and diversity, and challenging discrimination. This includes raising awareness of conscious and unconscious bias, and consideration of gender balance in relation to course choices.
- The Cults Academy Team for Charities (CATCh) collects loose change every week and young people choose which charities they present the money to. This aims to help young people to learn about others who are less fortunate than themselves, to show compassion and to develop as responsible citizens and effective contributors.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very good

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

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

ATTAINMENT IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Broad general education

- By the end of S3, almost all young people are achieving third level or better in literacy and most are achieving third level or better in numeracy.

Literacy

- In 2017 and 2018, by the end of S3, almost all young people achieved third Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level or better and most achieved fourth CfE level in all literacy measures (reading, writing, talking and listening). Predictions for this year are for almost all to achieve fourth level in reading and writing and all to achieve fourth level in listening and talking.

Numeracy

- In 2017 and 2018, by the end of S3, most young people achieved third CfE level or better and the majority achieved fourth CfE level in numeracy. Predictions for this year are for all young people to achieve third level and most to achieve fourth level by the end of S3.
- Staff are continuing to work on moderation work and 'achievement of a level' information to ensure the information on attainment in the BGE is reliable.

Senior phase

Leavers

- Most young people are attaining very well in literacy and numeracy by the time of leaving school.

Literacy

- Almost all young people leaving school over the past five years attained literacy at SCQF level 5 or better with most achieving SCQF level 6. Small numbers leave school at the end of S4 and, over the past two years, all of these young people attained literacy at SCQF level 4 or better. The school performs in line with the virtual comparator (VC).

Numeracy

- Almost all young people leaving school over the past five years achieved numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better with most achieving at SCQF level 5 or better and a majority achieving at SCQF level 6. Of those leaving at the end of S4, most achieve numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better. The school performs in line with the VC at SCQF levels 3 to 5 or better and performs significantly higher or much higher than the VC at SCQF level 6.

As they move through the senior phase

- In S4, almost all young people attained literacy at SCQF level 5 or better over the past five years. Most of those staying on to S5 and S6 attained literacy at SCQF level 6. The school performs in line with the VC across these measures.
- In S4, most young people attained numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better over the past four years. The majority staying on for S5 and S6 attained numeracy at SCQF level 6. The school performs significantly higher or much higher than the VC at SCQF level 6 in both S5 and S6.

ATTAINMENT OVER TIME

- The school has sustained strong attainment in National Qualifications over the past five years.
- The school has a tracking and monitoring calendar for both the broad general education and the senior phase. The headteacher and depute heads meet with faculty PTs twice each year to formally review attainment in both the BGE and the senior phase. These useful meetings include discussions of young people not progressing as expected and actions required.
- In the BGE staff are continuing to work with the National Benchmarks and, starting last session, are now reporting to parents on young people achieving CfE levels in all curricular areas. Faculties have a range of approaches to tracking and monitoring the progress of young people during the BGE. There is currently only data on literacy and numeracy showing progress over the past three years during the BGE.
- Faculty principal teachers, alongside senior leaders, have an important role to play in working together to agree a consistent school-wide approach to the terminology/language used to describe the progress of learners in the BGE in Cults Academy. The work needs to include collated information from across the school to track the progress towards achievement of a level in all curriculum areas, as well as literacy and numeracy. It will be important that the assessment evidence used to provide the data is reliable and valid. The school is planning to implement a school-wide tracking and monitoring system during the BGE but is waiting for overdue software to support this work. The tracking and monitoring system is needed to help staff make best use of data to plan appropriate interventions and inform strategic decisions such as the planning of learning pathways.

Senior phase

- Young people in the senior phase, in discussion with their class teacher, set aspirational, but realistic, target grades for qualifications. These grades are entered into the school-wide tracking system for all courses being taken by young people in the senior phase. Regular reporting of progress against grades provides useful information to ensure that young people are supported appropriately to attain well.
- Between 2014 and 2016, the average total tariff scores of the highest attaining 20% of leavers was significantly higher than the VC and has been in line with the VC in the past two years. The lowest attaining and middle attaining groups performed significantly higher or much higher than the VC between 2014 and 2017, dropping to in line with the VC in 2018.
- In S4, complementary tariff scores for the lowest attaining and middle attaining groups are significantly higher or much higher than the VC in three out of the past five years. The highest attaining group perform significantly higher or much higher than the VC.
- By S5, complementary tariff scores for the lowest attaining and middle attaining groups are significantly higher or much higher than the VC in three out of the past five years. The highest

attaining group perform in line with the VC in three out of the past five years and significantly higher than the VC in the other two years.

- By S6, complementary tariff scores for the highest attaining group are significantly higher or much higher than the VC over the past five years, the middle attaining group in four of the past five years and the lowest attaining in three of the past five years.
- Complementary tariff scores show some variability over the five years but remain at a high level, reflecting the very good attainment of young people in the senior phase.

Breadth and depth

- Almost all young people in S4 were presented for 6 qualifications over the past two years and in S5, the majority (2017) or most (2018) were presented for five qualifications. In S6, just less than half were presented for three or for four qualifications. The school has maintained a strong performance in attainment in the senior phase over the past five years.
- In S4, the percentage of young people attaining National Qualifications at SCQF level 4 or better is in line with the VC for one or more to six or more courses. The percentage attaining two or more to six or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better is above the VC in three of the past five years, including the latest year. At SCQF level 5A or better, the percentage attaining three to five courses is significantly higher than the VC in four of the past five years and significantly much higher than the VC for three and four courses in the latest year.
- By S5 and by S6, the percentage of young people attaining one to six National Qualifications at SCQF level 6C and 6A or better is often higher or significantly higher than the VC. By S6, the percentage of young people attaining one to three National Qualifications at SCQF level 7C or better and 7A is significantly higher or much higher than the VC.

OVERALL QUALITY OF LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT

- Young people benefit from a wide range of opportunities at lunchtime, after school and out of school. These include sports, study and creative and performing arts activities. Participation enables the majority of young people to achieve well and to build their social connections, knowledge and skills in areas of interest. There are high levels of participation, for example over the last three years around 40% of young people regularly take part in school sports groups supported by Active Schools. This includes the majority of girls in S1 and S2.
- All young people in S5 gain first aid skills through training provided by the Red Cross.
- Almost all young people in S1-3 build their skills and increase the positive relationships they have with peers through taking part in well-planned activities weeks. Adaptions are in place to ensure no-one is excluded due to additional support needs or cost. The weeks in S1 and S2 enable young people to try new activities and challenge themselves, building their confidence.
- Bespoke arrangements are made to enable a few individual young people to continue with courses in school, whilst pursuing areas where they are competing at local and national level outside of school. This includes adjusting timetables to enable young people to undertake specialist training in areas such as dance and sport. Several young people are achieving very well including representing Scotland in sports and gaining high level qualifications through external agencies.
- Young people participating in the Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV) programme run by a member of the chaplaincy group are gaining skills and self-esteem. This small group work

supports young people to better understand their own potential and in some cases re-engage with learning.

- Young people in the senior stages support others learning and their community. In S6, they are increasing their leadership and team working skills through involvement in a wide range of groups and committees. They support the wider life of the school in sports activities and diverse clubs such as science, chess, baking, STEM and debating. They also act as subject assistants, supporting learning in classes. Increasingly they are organising school events such as the Fresher's Fair in autumn 2018. There are a few opportunities for young people in other school years to participate in similar activities such as the Right Respecting Schools group. However, there are insufficient opportunities for young people to be involved in activities within school which will support their empowerment and enable them to fully contribute to school development.
- In the wider community, between August and December 2018, thirty-three young people delivered over two hundred active schools sports sessions for children and young people in the area. Several volunteer at the Friday Youth Café in a local church. A small group are working with the Council to re-develop a local skate park.
- Over each of the last five years, from 2014 to 2018, around sixty young people gained the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. In 2018 these young people contributed to the local community through volunteering in a wide range of projects from helping set up a park run, to contributing to uniformed organisation groups to working in a care home. Staff are now working to rebuild the programme to provide scope for larger numbers and progression routes through the awards.
- School leaver ceremonies support young people to recognise their achievements. Throughout the year many individual achievements are celebrated through social media posts, house noticeboards and at assemblies. Staff, sometimes with the support of partners, are at the early stages of increasing the opportunities for young people to gain national achievement awards such as Dynamic Youth awards. Young people would value a more systematic approach to recognising achievements and the move to increase accreditation could support this.
- The school is gathering evidence of young people's wider achievements. The planned use of surveys, alongside pupil profiles, should support capturing this information. Currently there is no systematic tracking of the skills that are being gained. The next stage is to help young people develop a better understanding of the skills they are acquiring through their participation in activities in and beyond the classroom. This will support young people to make informed choices which support them in progressing those skills for learning, life and work which are most appropriate for them. There is scope for a wider range of achievements to be formally recognised.

EQUITY FOR ALL LEARNERS

- Staff have a very good knowledge of young people and their individual circumstances. They ensure there is equity of access to all aspects of school life.
- The September 2017 SIMD distribution shows 86.3% of young people on the school roll living in deciles 8, 9 and 10, with 56.3% living in decile 10. Over the past five years, the average total tariff scores of leavers living in decile 10 is in line or significantly higher than those living in the same deciles across Scotland. For the small numbers living in deciles 6 and 7, average total tariff scores are in line with those living in the same deciles across Scotland. Average

complementary tariff scores of young people in S4, by S5 and by S6, are often significantly higher or much higher than those at the same stages in the same deciles across Scotland.

Initial leaver destinations

- All or almost all young people over the past five years have left Cults Academy for an initial positive destination. Most go to higher or further education on leaving school with a few leaving to enter employment.

Choice of QI: QI 2.6 Transitions

This indicator focuses on the need for children and young people to be well supported as they move into school, through school and beyond school. Effective partnership working, tracking of progress and robust record keeping are essential to support continuity in learning at points of transition. That continuity is crucial to maximising children and young people's successes and ensuring the most appropriate post-school destination. The themes are:

- Arrangements to support learners and their families
 - Collaborative planning and delivery
 - Continuity and progression in learning
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- Young people moving from P7 to Cults Academy are supported through a few school visits when they experience learning within the secondary setting. The parents of primary children also attend the secondary school for an information evening. This helps them to understand the workings of the secondary school and meet senior leaders and support staff.
 - Initiatives led by the Rights Respecting Schools Group and Active Schools are also supporting children's transition into the secondary. Young people from the Rights Respecting Group at Cult's Academy are working with children from the primary schools to devise a common charter across the associated school group. This work has the potential to enhance children's transition from primary to secondary. The work of Active Schools is engaging most young people in transition activities during school holidays. This is leading to children developing relationships with new friends from an early stage. The school should seek to build on this positive work to develop further a well-planned range of pastoral and curricular programmes to support the transition process from primary to secondary.
 - The collaborative planning, focused on pastoral transitions across the associated school group, is supporting transition for cohorts of learners as well as individuals. Pupils requiring additional support benefit from an enhanced transition programme which involves additional school visits and early identification of support. Young people requiring support are identified through transition conferences, which are led by both primary and secondary colleagues. For a few young people this involves them being linked with a named person from secondary as early as P6. Working on this individual approach from an early stage helps children to build their confidence as they move towards S1. This ensures that the most vulnerable learners and their families are known to staff before they arrive in S1.
 - There are effective arrangements for the transfer of information from primary to secondary. In P7, young people reflect on their strengths and development needs using the wellbeing wheel. Information relating to the wellbeing indicators is shared with secondary staff through the P7 profile and helps to inform support for young people in S1. Young people report that they feel well-supported during transition and that their needs are met well in S1. Recent work on developing a common approach to profiling using a digital platform has been well received by primary and secondary colleagues. Development of this will further enhance information sharing across the associated school group.
 - Professional judgement information on literacy and numeracy is shared with English and mathematics teachers. In the final term of primary, young people complete literacy and numeracy jotters which help to inform progression in these areas across primary and secondary. Over past years, a few departments have developed collaborative working across the associated school group and effective planning of transition projects is supporting an improved understanding of progression in a few curricular areas. There is a need to ensure

greater collaboration between primary and secondary colleagues to consider progression pathways in line with the National Benchmarks. Approaches to moderation should be developed across the associated school group, supporting a shared understanding of achieving a level.

- The school provides information for parents and young people on course choice through assemblies and information evenings. However there is a need to broaden the range of information provided on learner pathways to ensure young people and their families can make more informed choices about future planning. The course choice documents do not identify all available progression routes or the range of possible employment opportunities that link with each subject choice.
- Young people in S3 are engaging with the MyWOW programme to support transition from the BGE to the Senior Phase. Young people's progression through the BGE is captured in their S3 profile and their achievements are celebrated before transition. There is considerable scope to develop the use of the S3 profile using the PSE resource to enhance young people's understanding of their skills and to link these to planning future learning pathways.
- A few young people are accessing learning opportunities out with the school in the senior phase, including college options and Foundation Apprenticeships. Young people talk positively about the value of these opportunities and are planning their own learning pathways as a result. Young people report that they would benefit from improved information and support on college transition to ensure they are well informed about the choices they are making.
- The implementation of the Career Education Standard (CES), Work Placement Standard (WPS) and career management skills (CMS) is at a very early stage across the school. A few young people in the senior phase are benefitting from opportunities to undertake a bespoke work experience. However, the majority of young people are not receiving their entitlement to experience a work placement. The school recognises that a more robust approach to employer engagement is required to ensure that all young people develop an awareness of the world of work.
- Young people speak very positively about the support provided for post-school destinations in S6 which is helping them make effective transition to university and college. A well-planned range of pastoral, social and curricular support is preparing young people well for life beyond school. The tracking of young people in the senior phase enables early intervention and ensures young people at risk of not achieving a positive destination engage with supports such as Skills Development Scotland (SDS). Commendably this support enabled 100% of young people to move to a positive post-school destination last year.

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.