Summarised inspection findings

Fortrose Academy

The Highland Council

11 February 2020

School Name   Fortrose Academy
Council: The Highland Council
SEED number: 5119332
Roll (Sep 2018): 621

Attendance is generally above the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In February 2019 5.5% of pupils were registered for free school meals.
In September 2018 no pupils live in 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.
In September 2018 the school reported that 46.1% of pupils had additional support needs.

Key contextual information

Fortrose Academy is a comprehensive, six year secondary school which serves the Black Isle area of Ross-shire. It draws its pupils from seven associated primary schools – Avoch, Cromarty, Culbokie, North Kessock, Munlochy, Resolis and Tore. The headteacher has been in post for approximately 15 months. He is supported by three depute head teachers who have been in post for approximately nine years, five years and in an acting capacity for two weeks respectively.

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

■ Fortrose Academy has a strong culture of learning. Respectful relationships result in a positive ethos and a calm, purposeful learning environment. Young people work very well independently, organise themselves efficiently and demonstrate self-reliance in a variety of contexts.

■ In most lessons teachers share effectively the purpose of learning and what successful learning looks like with young people. In all lessons, instructions and explanations are clear. A few teachers are highly skilled in deepening young people's learning through effective questioning. Teachers should share this practice more widely across the school so that young people demonstrate higher-level skills more regularly and consistently. Teachers should continue to increase the range of teaching approaches to ensure that young people experience a variety of ways to learn. Teachers need to develop further high-quality plenary sessions, particularly in the broad general education (BGE) phase. This should help teachers revisit the purpose of the lesson and check for young people's understanding.

■ Staff give young people valuable advice, opportunities and support to progress in their learning. Young people's views are sought in a number of ways across the school and they respond well when their views are acted upon. Most young people effectively lead and direct aspects of their own learning and respond well when given opportunities to do so. These opportunities also help to increase their confidence. Young people would welcome more opportunities to lead their own learning within lessons. As planned, teachers should now seek ways to develop further learner participation to allow young people to shape how they learn.

■ Staff have a good understanding of the needs of young people. These are met well in the majority of lessons. Young people engage well in their learning where tasks, activities and resources are at a level and pace that meets their own needs. Teachers need to ensure this good practice is applied consistently across the school and that all young people experience appropriate challenge in their learning. Teachers should continue to develop a shared understanding of standards so that they are planning activities and tasks set at the right level of difficulty.

■ Teachers use digital technology highly effectively to enhance learners' experiences and support the development of skills for learning, life and work. Most teachers use technology creatively in their lessons. This gives young people a good degree of choice in how they present their learning. Courses and study notes are available electronically through digital devices. This helps young people's independent learning skills develop very well, particularly in the senior phase.

■ A range of partners, including those from business, worked well recently with staff in the school to create the 'Fortrose Academy Super Six Skills' framework. This framework aims to help

young people recognise how they are developing skills and the importance of skills for learning, life and work. It focuses on resilience, collaboration, communication, creativity, digital and organisational skills. The associated schools group has now adopted this. Teachers reference these skills in almost all lessons and as a result, young people are beginning to identify and recognise these skills in themselves. This encourages them to reflect on how they are developing transferrable skills for learning, life and work.

- In the senior phase, almost all young people receive high-quality feedback through learning conversations with their subject teachers. Young people at these stages are confident in discussing their working grade and target grades. They are clear about their strengths and next steps in learning. In the BGE, practice is inconsistent. Although young people can identify the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level they are working within, they are less clear on what they need to do to improve and what the levels actually mean. Staff should build on existing good practice to ensure that all young people benefit from high quality feedback to support them to know themselves as learners.

- In the BGE, teachers gather a range of assessment evidence including internal assessments and results from the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA). Teachers now need to act on this assessment evidence more effectively to inform planning of learning, teaching and assessment. This should ensure all young people make appropriate progress. Teachers should use their knowledge of young people's strengths and next steps to plan appropriate interventions and evidence improvements.

- Teachers need to develop further their understanding of standards and expectations for CfE levels within the BGE. They should capitalise on the support provided by the local authority's quality assurance and moderation support officers and find opportunities to look outwards to other schools to increase their confidence in assessment and moderation.

- In the senior phase, teachers show a very good understanding of assessment requirements within courses and use approaches that support young people to make progress towards gaining National Qualifications. Teachers who undertake Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) roles and duties are supporting others to understand better national standards and expectations.

- The well-established learning, teaching and assessment working group have developed a very helpful learning, teaching and assessment policy and have led professional learning sessions for staff. It is important that senior leaders continue to drive forward improvements in a way that makes clear the inter-relationship between learning, teaching, the use of assessment and planning, tracking and monitoring.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

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

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	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
BGE

- ■ Senior leaders provided assessment data for young people's attainment in literacy and numeracy in the BGE. This shows that the school has sustained strong attainment in CfE levels over the past three years. In 2018/19, by the end of S3, almost all young people achieved CfE third level or better in the three literacy measures and in numeracy. Most young people achieved fourth curriculum level in reading and numeracy by the end of S3 in 2019. A majority of young people achieved fourth curriculum level in writing and listening and talking by the end of S3 in 2018/19.

- ■ Teachers use SNSA results, a range of internal class tests and National Benchmarks to support their professional judgement of achievement of a level. Teachers, in partnership with their associated primary colleagues, participate in local authority moderation activities to help improve their understanding of standards. Teachers should continue to develop their understanding of moderation and 'achievement of a level' information to ensure the information on attainment in the BGE is reliable and robust.

- ■ Senior leaders use attainment data to identify young people who would benefit from targeted support in areas of literacy and numeracy. This is supporting young people to access the curriculum through for example, focused work on spelling and reading strategies such as decoding. The majority of young people who receive this additional support in literacy show improvements in their confidence and reading abilities.

Senior phase

- ■ Most young people are attaining well in literacy and numeracy by the time of leaving school. Teachers target support for leavers in S4 and collectively focus on ensuring that no young person leaves with no awards. This has resulted in all S4 leavers achieving Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 3 or better in both literacy and numeracy in 2017/18. Senior leaders should keep under review approaches to presenting young people for unit awards if tracking information suggests that they may be able to attain the course award.

- ■ Almost all young people who left school between 2013/14 and 2017/18 attained literacy at SCQF level 4 or better, including as part of a course award. Most attained SCQF level 5 or better in 2016/17 and 2017/18. A majority of young people attained literacy at SCQF level 6 from 2013/14 to 2017/18. This has fallen from being in line with the virtual comparator (VC) to being significantly lower than the VC in 2016/17 and 2017/18. Senior leaders have identified that this is due in part, to the number of young people, particularly in S5, who move into employment or further education during the academic session without completing courses.

- Almost all young people who left school between 2013/14 and 2017/18 attained a numeracy qualification at SCQF level 4 or better. Most achieved SCQF level 5 or better between 2014/15 and 2017/18. This is significantly higher than the VC in 2015/16 and 2017/18. There has been a steady improvement in this measure over the past five years to 2017/18.

- Senior leaders recognise they need to ensure that assessment, monitoring and tracking in the BGE is more consistently robust across departments to enable learners to make choices that are more informed. Teachers should also continue to develop their confidence in assessing CfE levels and understanding how they articulate with qualifications and awards at SCQF levels. This will better support discussions with young people on their appropriate course choices into and through the senior phase.

- The percentage of young people in S4 attaining literacy at SCQF level 4 or better and at SCQF level 5 or better was overall in line with the VC over the five year period 2014/15 to 2017/18, and was significantly higher in 2018/19 at SCQF level 5. By S5, as a percentage of the S4 roll, most young people attained literacy at SCQF level 5 or better in 2018/19. This improved from being significantly lower than the VC in 2017/18 to being in line with the VC. The percentage attaining at SCQF level 6 is generally in line with the VC. The percentage of S6 attaining literacy at SCQF level 5 or better and at SCQF level 6 is mostly in line with the VC.

- The percentage of young people at S4 attaining numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better is significantly much higher or higher than the VC over the past five years. By S5, as a percentage of the S4 roll, the percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 6 or better is significantly much higher or higher than the VC in three of years over the same period. In the other two years, the school was in line with the VC. By S6, the percentage of young people attaining SCQF level 5 or better and SCQF level 6 is variable. The percentage of young people attaining at SCQF level 6 was in line with the VC for 2017/18 and 2018/19 having been previously significantly much higher.

Attainment over time
BGE
- Senior leaders have recently developed a whole-school approach to monitoring and tracking young people's progress in the BGE. Staff use a common language to provide an indication of young people's progress through a CfE level. A degree of clarity is required around these definitions including the robustness of assessment evidence that underpins teachers' professional judgement. Senior leaders collect data across all departments at specific times over the course of a year. They use this data to identify who is working beyond expectations, at expected standards and those not meeting expected standards. Senior leaders identify interventions to support learners based on this data. They recognise that a strategic overview is required to demonstrate improvements in attainment across curriculum areas as young people move through the BGE. In addition, they need to monitor and evaluate more closely the impact of interventions adopted at departmental level for those young people identified at tracking points.

Senior phase
- Based on complementary tariff points, in 2016/17 the lowest attaining 20%, the middle attaining 60% and the highest attaining 20% of all leavers either attained significantly higher than or significantly much higher than the VC. The following year (2017/18) all groups attained in line with the VC.

- In S4 the middle attaining 60% performed significantly higher than the VC in three of the past five years. In S5, based on the S4 roll, this group attained significantly higher than the VC in 2014/15 to 2016/17 and in line with the VC in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The middle attaining 60%

of young people in S6, based on the S4 roll, followed a similar pattern to those in S5 with the exception of 2016/17 when they attained significantly much higher than the VC.

■ The highest attaining 20% in S4, by S5 and S6 have attained either in line with the VC, higher than or significantly much higher than the VC in each of the years 2013/14 to 2018/19. In the latest year 2018/19, the highest attaining 20% of young people in S5 attained significantly much higher than the VC. In 2018/19 the percentage of young people by S5 who attained at SCQF 6A+ for three or more to five or more qualifications is significantly much higher than the VC. This is contributing to the improvement in complementary tariff points.

Breadth and depth
■ Most young people at S4 were presented for 6 or more qualifications between 2016/17 and 2018/19. At S4 the percentage of young people attaining one or more to six or more courses at SCQF level 5C+ or better has been in line with the VC over the past five years. At SCQF level 5A+ or better, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to five or more was mostly significantly higher than the VC in 2017/18 and 2018/19. Senior leaders recognise that building on the breadth and challenge in assessments across the school should lead to more robust assessment evidence and yet further improvements.

■ By S5, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to five or more National Qualifications at SCQF level 6C+ or better and SCQF level 6A+ or better is often significantly higher or much higher than the VC. The percentage of young people attaining 5 or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C+ or better has been in line with or significantly higher than the VC over a five year period to 2018/19. In the latest year the percentage of young people attaining at this level is the highest since 2014/15 and is now significantly higher than the VC. In 2018/19, the percentage of young people attaining three or more to five or more National Qualifications at SCQF level 6A+ or better is significantly much higher than the VC. This is a positive and improving picture.

■ By S6, the percentage of young people attaining one or more to seven or more qualifications at SCQF level 6C+ or better and SCQF level 6A+ was in line with the VC in 2017/18 and 2018/19. Young people attain very well in Advanced Highers with the percentage attaining at SCQF level 7A being significantly higher or significantly much higher for three or more qualifications than the VC from 2016/17 to 2018/19. At SCQF level 7C+ or better in 2018/19 the percentage of young people attaining at this level is significantly much higher than the VC. This is an improvement from being in line in the previous year. Senior leaders continue to strive to develop further the curriculum offer for these young people which now includes, for example, foundation apprenticeships and social services and healthcare awards at SCQF level 7.

Overall quality of learners' achievement
■ The majority of young people are developing confidence and skills for learning, life and work through a wide range of experiences. Many of these take account of the local community context. The work of the Highlife Highland Youth Development Team enables young people to volunteer in a diverse range of settings both in school and in the community. Through these activities, young people gain accreditation such as Saltire and Youth Leader Awards, as well as first aid and defibrillation courses. This contributes to young people having a strong sense of community. The successful Young Enterprise Scotland programme has led to young people gaining national success as Scottish champions and UK finalists in session 2018/19. The school celebrates these successes and achievements well on social media channels and in school displays.

- Young people play an active role in supporting others in the community, for example through participation in programmes such as Black Isle Cares. Participation in this initiative allows young people to develop empathy and their own and others' resilience. Young people develop their citizenship skills very effectively in the community through engaging with community councils and the Wellbeing in the Black Isle Group. These programmes are helping to develop young people's own wellbeing, allowing them to take more responsibility in the community.

- The active schools coordinators are proactive in encouraging young people to participate in a variety of sporting opportunities. This allows young people to develop their skills in health and wellbeing and sport, and to attain accreditation. Most young people participate in a diverse range of after school sporting clubs and can articulate how this is developing their skills in leadership and communication. The school attained a sportscotland Gold School Sport Award in 2016/17. This demonstrates the school's ongoing commitment to increase sporting and leadership opportunities for young people and to provide clear pathways to life-long participation in sport.

- Most young people articulate clearly how their participation in achievements is helping them develop skills such as those detailed in the Fortrose Academy Super Six Skills framework. Staff and partners record learner participation in sport and volunteering. Young people have opportunities to reflect on these skills through planned conversations with teachers. Staff should develop the quality of these learner conversations. This should help young people recognise the value of them and to develop further their transferrable skills. Staff should also ensure that the data they gather records young people's participation in all activities outwith school. Senior leaders, working with community partners, should continue to develop opportunities for wider achievement for young people who may be at risk of not participating.

Equity for all learners
- Staff have a very good knowledge of young people and their individual circumstances. They ensure equity of access to all aspects of school life by overcoming barriers to learning.

- The September 2018 SIMD distribution shows that almost all young people on the school roll live in deciles seven and eight. Over the past five years, between 2014/15 and 2018/19, the average complementary tariff scores for leavers has generally been in line with national figures. However in 2015/16 and 2016/17 complementary tariff scores were significantly higher than national figures for young people in S5 in decile seven. Average complementary tariff scores for young people in S4, by S5 and by S6 are mainly in line with those at the same stages in the same deciles across Scotland.

Initial leaver destinations
- Young people are encouraged to consider a range of options by school staff and Skills Development Scotland coaches. Almost all young people between 2013/14 and 2017/18 move into positive initial destinations after school. The majority of young people go to higher or further education on leaving school.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Intergenerational work and citizenship skills

The key role the school has within the community is evident in the collaborative approach to partnership working. This is resulting in transformative changes for individual young people.

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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.