

# Summarised inspection findings

**Douglas Academy**

East Dunbartonshire Council

7 February 2023

## Key contextual information

School Name Douglas Academy  
Council: East Dunbartonshire Council  
SEED number: 8325731  
Roll: 1037

Attendance is generally above the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In February 2022, 4.1 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.  
In September 2021, 4.1% per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.  
In September 2021, the school reported that 19 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

The school successfully ensured continuity of learning for young people during the pandemic through the provision of high quality learning materials.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- The ethos and culture at Douglas Academy, as an inclusive learning community, clearly reflect the school's vision of Working Together, Respecting Others and Pursuing Excellence. This clear vision is embedded in their core values of compassion, ambition, resilience and effort and in the high expectations that the headteacher sets out for all young people. These are further underpinned by the school community's commitment to promoting the articles of the United Nation's Charter of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The work of the school has been recognised through accreditation of the Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) Gold award. Across the school, the culture of respect is evident and young people are very respectful to one another and to staff. Relationships across the school are very positive and set the tone for calm, supportive and purposeful learning experiences.
- In almost all lessons, young people participate well in the learning activities designed and delivered by teachers. Young people are very well motivated to achieve, and organise themselves efficiently with minimal adult input. When given the opportunity, young people actively engage in their learning and respond well to motivating tasks. Staff need to ensure that young people are more consistently engaged in the learning process. Young people would welcome greater opportunities of having a say in how they learn.
- In a variety of subject areas, learners' experiences are enhanced by teachers' creative use of digital technologies. This helps to engage learners and promote high levels of participation. For example, the use of digital apps and devices to record performances. In a few subject areas, teachers create well-designed opportunities for young people to lead aspects of their learning.

In these cases, young people take decisions, initiate tasks, ask questions and find information, often taking personal control of their own learning.

- The strategic implementation of 'Lesson Study' to further promote improvement in learning and teaching involves all staff. Through this collaborative professional activity, teachers identify key areas for improvement, as well as their view of effective practice, which they share across subject departments. Teachers work closely with young people to record their experiences throughout this collaborative improvement activity. Overall, this creative approach is having a positive impact on focused areas of learning, teaching and assessment in a variety of subject areas. As a next step, senior leaders and teachers should develop a whole-school approach to evaluating the quality of learning, teaching and assessment, benchmarked against the national standards and expectations. A more strategic and consistent approach to monitoring the quality of the school's improvement work in this area will help to complement the existing approaches to improving learning and teaching currently in place.
- In almost all lessons, teachers set out the aims and objectives of learning and assessment to frame the focus of learning. In most lessons, these learning intentions are specific and relate clearly to the intended learning, rather than completion of a task. They help to focus formative assessment practices, such as self-assessment by young people. Most teachers model effective approaches to learning with learners and share high quality pieces of work to exemplify what success looks like. Teachers create opportunities for young people to develop success criteria with each other.
- A number of teachers use formative assessment strategies effectively to monitor student learning on a day-to-day basis and tailor their teaching accordingly. They use questioning skilfully to probe understanding, working with individual learners on a one-to-one basis or in groups to discuss their work and identify misconceptions, and use exit passes. The use of retrieval practice sessions where teachers can revisit prior learning is also supporting young people well. Almost all teachers use formal assessment methods well to check for understanding through for example, mid-term tests. Staff use assessment outcomes very well to help inform any subsequent planning of learning, teaching and assessment. In almost all departments, teachers have a very strong understanding of how well their learners are progressing throughout the Broad General Education (BGE) and senior phase. Senior leaders have in place robust processes across the school that enable departments to identify young people at risk of underachieving on a fortnightly basis. This then informs a range of strategies for supporting these young people, including targeted supported study or directed tasks and activities to consolidate learning.
- Almost all teachers across subject areas engage in moderation activity within departments to ensure a common understanding of expectations, using the National Benchmarks in the BGE. As a result, teachers develop courses and programmes in the BGE that are set at the right level of difficulty for their young people. Teachers' planning takes into account learners' individual rate of progress and as a result activities and tasks reflect either third or fourth Curriculum for Excellence levels. This provides a high degree of challenge for many learners. Tasks and activities could be more demanding in a few areas. Teachers are beginning to take an increasingly holistic approach when reaching judgements of achievement of a level. They are moving away from basing judgements solely on one-off tests or pieces of work to a range of evidence based on breadth, challenge and application of learning. This approach should continue across all subject areas with further opportunities to discuss and share assessment approaches and expectations with colleagues across the local authority and beyond.
- In the senior phase, teachers have a very strong 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 targets. Teachers develop this 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. Young people in the senior phase have a very strong understanding of their strengths and next steps in learning. They have regular opportunities to discuss their learning with their teachers. As a result, young people show independence in moving their own learning forwards. Across the BGE, teachers should continue with learner conversations to ensure that young people are aware of their strengths and next steps.

## 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

excellent

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

- The school has a culture of ambition and high expectations. The headteacher, fully supported by his senior leadership team, has a relentless drive to ensure that each individual young person fulfils their potential. He has developed a culture of empowerment that has resulted in staff developing more flexible learning pathways across the senior phase that meet the needs of young people. Senior leaders are very skilful in analysing data. They are committed to its use to effect improvements for all individuals.

### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Young people are attaining exceptionally well in literacy and numeracy and sustaining these high standards over time. By the end of S3, almost all young people are achieving third CfE level or better in literacy and numeracy. This high level of achievement has been sustained between 2019 and 2022. In 2022, by the end of S3, most young people achieved fourth CfE level in all literacy measures and numeracy.

### Senior phase

#### Leavers

- Almost all young people are attaining exceptionally well in literacy and most are attaining very well in numeracy by the time of leaving school. High levels of scrutiny of monitoring and tracking data by senior leaders ensures that young people maximise their qualifications before leaving school.

#### Literacy

- Almost all young people leaving school between 2016/17 to 2020/21 attained literacy at SCQF level 5 or better with most achieving SCQF level 6, with the exception of 2020/21. Over the same time period, the school is performing in line with the virtual comparator (VC) across these measures.

#### Numeracy

- Almost all young people leaving school between 2016/17 to 2020/21 achieved numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better with most achieving at SCQF level 5 or better. At SCQF level 6 the school generally performs significantly higher than the VC. The increased range of learning pathways in the senior phase have contributed to this.

#### Cohorts

- As young people move through the senior phase, they are consistently sustaining very high standards in literacy and numeracy.

## ATTAINMENT OVER TIME

### Broad general education

- Young people are attaining exceptionally well in all curriculum areas and sustaining these high standards over time despite the challenges of the pandemic. In the BGE, the school collates data for all subjects showing the percentages of young people achieving third and fourth CfE levels.
- By the end of S3, almost all young people are achieving third CfE level or better in all subject areas out with literacy and English, and numeracy and Mathematics with the exception of one discrete subject area. The high percentage of young people attaining at these levels has been sustained over time. By the end of S3, most young people are achieving fourth CfE level or better in almost all subject areas outwith literacy and English, and numeracy and Mathematics. The attainment levels in the BGE are outstanding.

### Senior Phase

- The school has consistently sustained an exceptionally high standard of attainment in National Qualifications over the past five years.
- Based on average complementary tariff scores, the school is sustaining very high standards for the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% as they leave the school. Broadly between 2016/17 to 2020/21 for all these attainment groups, the school has sustained a significantly higher or much higher performance than the VC. The only exception being in 2017/18 and 2018/19 when the highest attaining 20% performed in line with the VC.
- As young people move through S4-S6, based on complementary tariff scores, performance remains consistently high, reflecting the very strong attainment of young people in the senior phase.
- In S4, by S5 and by S6 complementary tariff scores for the lowest attaining, middle attaining and highest attaining groups are consistently significantly higher or much higher than the VC over the past five years. The school's performance against this measure is outstanding.

### Breadth and Depth

- The school has maintained an exceptionally strong performance in attainment in the senior phase over the past five years.
- The school is consistently sustaining an exceptionally high standard in S4 over time. At S4, there are very high standards of attainment being consistently sustained at SCQF level 5 or better over time. The percentage of young people attaining National Qualifications at SCQF level 5 or better for one or more to seven or more courses is significantly higher or much higher than the VC in the past five years from 2018/19 to 2021/22. At SCQF level 5A or better, the percentage attaining one to seven courses is significantly higher or much higher than the VC in the past five years from 2018/19 to 2021/22.
- The school is consistently sustaining an exceptionally high standard by S5 and S6 over time. The attainment of young people by S5 and by S6 at SCQF level 6C or better for one or more to five or more courses is consistently significantly higher, or much higher than the VC. By S5, the attainment at SCQF level 6A or better for one or more to five or more courses is consistently significantly higher or much higher than the VC in the past five years from 2017/18 to 2021/22. By S6, the attainment at this level is also significantly higher or much higher than the VC.



- By S6, the percentage of young people attaining one to three National Qualifications at SCQF level 7C or better has improved in the past five years from 2017/18 to 2021/22. By S6 attainment at this level is also significantly much higher than the VC.
- In almost all subjects in the senior phase young people are achieving well above national results. High quality passes at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher are of particular note.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Almost all young people across the school are developing a broad range of skills and attributes as a result of participation in the school's extensive programme of wider achievement. Almost all young people are also gaining a wide range of recognised and accredited awards. The levels of achievement across the school are outstanding.
- Young people across the school are achieving very highly in a range of sporting, cultural, musical, debating and other school-based activities as individuals and team members. Young people benefit from a range of sporting activities which improve their fitness levels and develop team working skills. As a School of Music, a large number of young people take part in a range of performances, developing their confidence and self-esteem as well as skills in performing. Young people's musical talents are outstanding. Young people, particularly in the upper stages, take responsibility and make positive and effective contributions to the life of the school and the local community.
- In S1 and S3 the 'Right Here, Right Now' initiative recognises young people's work in understanding of children's rights through work directly linked to the UNCRC articles. 'Right Here, Right Now' Ambassadors are developing their communication and leadership skills through supporting S1 learners. Across the school a number of learners are participating in the Young STEM Leaders programme. These young people are developing their leadership skills very effectively through their work with Douglas P7 Transition Programme.
- Senior Phase learners have been trained in both the 'Mentors in Violence Prevention' and the 'Mental Health Ambassadors' programmes. This has developed their confidence and leadership skills. A range of pupils are involved in supporting the local community through the Youth Philanthropy Initiative, Silver Surfers, Milngavie Community Council and working with local Care Homes and elderly within the community. Young people have a very strong understanding of their responsibility to others.
- An increasing number of learners are developing their skills of communication, commitment, leadership and teamwork through participating in the Duke of Edinburgh award at both Bronze and Silver level. Young people talk confidently about their volunteering experiences both within the school and the community, developing their communication and leadership skills. This is leading to a large number of young people achieving the Saltire award. The school DA'rista is providing a number of volunteering opportunities for young people to develop their confidence, time management and employability skills. Young people talk confidently about their team working and organisational skills.
- Senior leaders ensure that any potential barriers to participation are minimised. Funds are available to support those in need of financial assistance to participate in activities or trips. As a result, almost all young people benefit from these achievements at no financial cost.
- Senior leaders monitor and track young people's participation across the school and are therefore able to identify those young people who are not involved in activities. Staff are



developing systematic approaches to capture young people's achievements outside the school to ensure that no young person is at risk of missing out. Senior leaders could build on existing approaches to develop further tracking to include the skills that young people are achieving through their wider achievements.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Most young people reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 8, 9 and 10. As these young people leave the school, they are consistently performing significantly much higher and significantly higher than young people living in the same deciles across Scotland. This is also the case as these young people move through the school.
- Staff have successfully accelerated the progress of those most affected by poverty. The gap in complementary tariff scores between quintiles 1 and 5 has significantly reduced between 2018-19 to 2021-22. Those young people in quintile 1 have shown a significant improvement in attainment. Senior leaders report that increased pathways in the senior phase, more informed coursing based on robust data, and the targeted use of staff to support literacy and numeracy account for this school's highly effective approaches to raising attainment for those in quintile 1.

### **Destinations**

- The percentage of young people in S4 and S5 who stay on at school is very high. Only a small number of young people leave at the end of S4. Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, almost all young people have entered a positive destination on leaving school. The majority go to higher education on leaving school with a minority leaving to go to further education and a few who enter employment.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

- The headteacher's empowering leadership in creating a climate of high aspirations and expectations. As a result, young people's attainment and achievements are sector leading.
- The arrangements for monitoring and tracking attainment throughout the school is outstanding. Senior leaders have developed a comprehensive whole school system that allows underachievement to be identified promptly. Staff at all levels are pro-active in analysing this data and using this to help inform coursing.
- Staff have a very strong understanding of assessment standards in National Qualifications in the senior phase. As a result, young people are aware of what they need to do to achieve high standards.

## 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.