

**ITEM No ...5.....**

**REPORT TO:** SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 24 APRIL 2024  
**REPORT ON:** EDUCATION SCOTLAND (HMI) RETURN VISIT – BALDRAGON ACADEMY  
**REPORT BY:** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE  
**REPORT NO:** 126-2024

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to report on the findings of the Education Scotland, His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMI) return visit to Baldragon Academy in December 2023.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- i) notes the contents of this report; and
- ii) instructs the Chief Education Officer to monitor progress towards meeting the areas for improvement identified.

**3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 None.

**4.0 MAIN TEXT**

4.1 Education Scotland undertook a return visit by His Majesty's (HM) Inspectors of Education in December 2023 in relation to the previous inspection of January 2023. HM Inspectors published a report of their findings on 5 March 2024.

4.2 At the time of the inspection there were 881 pupils on the school roll. The Head Teacher has been in post since 2018. The majority of pupils attending the school reside within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 to 3 with around 35% of the school's pupil roll registered for free school meals. The school's provision is enhanced to support a range of pupils requiring additional support for their learning and the school currently has one enhanced support area (ESA).

4.3 The School Improvement Plan 2023/24 is focused on the identified areas for improvement from the original inspection. This is regularly reviewed, monitored, and evaluated in line with school and local authority's quality improvement procedures.

4.4 HM Inspectors' findings regarding the progress the school has made since the original inspection and how well this is supporting young people's learning, and achievements can be found in Appendix 1.

4.5 Key areas of progress noted include:

- Robust procedures are in place to monitor and track attendance and late coming. This has resulted in a reduction in unexplained absences and late comings.
- Staff support responsible behaviour during breaks, which improves pupils' sense of safety.

- Staff have worked well with senior leaders and Dundee City Council officers to outline the features of high-quality learning and teaching – the Pupil Voice Classroom Commitment is used as a set of expectations for staff and pupils.
- Senior leaders have developed more effective approaches across the school that assist staff in reviewing young people’s progress in the senior phase.
- Evidence of effective and organised planning from the enthusiastic teachers in the Enhanced Support Area (ESA).
- Staff have been working well to improve the progress of their learners and there are a few departments performing well.
- Senior leaders have developed more effective approaches across the school that assist staff in reviewing young people’s progress in the senior phase.
- There are clear expectations for all staff to use data to help inform approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment including planning tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty.
- There are early signs of improvement in young people’s attainment in Literacy and Numeracy in both the broad general education (BGE) and in the senior phase.
- Performance is now in line with the virtual comparator (VC) for Literacy

#### 4.6 Key next steps identified:

- Strengthen approaches to respond to behaviour issues both within and out with classes and ensure tasks and activities are sufficiently motivating, engaging, and relevant for young people.
- Maintain a continued focus on improving pedagogy within the ESA.
- There are features of highly effective practice in learning and teaching and use of attainment data that could be further shared and built upon across the school.
- Further develop a more robust presentation policy.
- Continue to improve young people’s attendance, attitudes to learning and behaviour.
- Middle leaders should strengthen arrangements to monitor progress through the BGE.

4.7 Members of the Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Convenor of Children, Families and Communities, were invited to visit Baldragon Academy. This took place on 12 March 2024. Elected Members were given a tour of the school by senior pupils, and a high-level overview of the school’s improvement journey to-date as well as key actions planned. Elected Members had the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback.

4.9 As part of the Children and Families Service School Improvement Framework, visits are made to the school by the school’s link Education Officer to monitor the school’s progress and improvement in relation to any identified areas for improvement. The Executive Director and Chief Education Officer also visit the school frequently to meet with the senior leadership team, and to speak with pupils and staff to review progress. Staff continue to address the recommendations from both the original inspection and the follow up visits, and have made some important progress.

4.10 Education Scotland plan a further inspection visit in June 2024. Dundee City Council will continue to inform parents about the school’s progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service.

## 5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

## **6.0 CONSULTATION**

6.1 The Council Leadership Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its content.

## **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 None.

Audrey May  
Executive Director of Children and Families  
Dundee City Council

Paul Fleming  
Chief Education Officer  
Head of Education, Learning & Inclusion

April 2024

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Dundee City Council Children and Families Service  
Scrutiny Committee Report Baldragon Academy letter of visit



13 June 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

In January 2023, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Baldragon Academy. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- The headteacher, the senior leadership team and almost all staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural, and economic context of the school. This helps them to provide caring and targeted support for individual young people and their families, including those who learn in the Enhanced Support Areas.
- Staff and partners work well together to provide young people with a range of opportunities for success, such as the School of Sport, the Baldragon Barista Academy, the Baldragon Bee Academy and the Rural Skills Group. As a result, young people develop important skills and qualities.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and representatives from Dundee City Council.

- Develop a school culture, underpinned by agreed school values, that promotes higher aspirations and expectations of all young people. This needs to focus on improving young people's attendance and late coming, and the attitudes to learning and behaviour of a minority of young people.
- Develop more robust plans, building on the 'Baldragon Way', to improve learning and teaching across the school. This should ensure that all young people benefit from high-quality learning and teaching that meets their needs effectively.
- Work with staff from the local authority to improve attainment as an immediate priority across the school, especially in S4, by S5 and by S6.
- Continue to develop effective approaches across the school that assist staff in reviewing regularly all young people's progress and in providing appropriate support that meets all young people's needs.

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5 March 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Baldrigon Academy. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Dundee City Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

**Develop a school culture, underpinned by agreed school values, that promotes higher aspirations and expectations of all young people. This needs to focus on improving young people's attendance and late coming, and the attitudes to learning and behaviour of a minority of young people.**

Senior leaders have introduced stronger arrangements to monitor young people's attendance by undertaking detailed analysis of pupil absence on a more regular basis. They are contacting parents more promptly and promoting good attendance. Although attendance rates are higher than previous years, overall attendance rates remain significantly behind the national average and therefore continued action is required. This includes the Enhanced Support Area (ESA) where attendance remains low.

Senior leaders have also introduced more effective arrangements to monitor late coming. Principal Teachers of Guidance, supported by senior leaders, are now better able to challenge young people's late coming. As a result, the number of late comings from August to December 2023 has reduced.

Senior leaders recognise the ongoing need to address the attitudes to learning and behaviour of a significant minority of young people across the school. Too often, young people do not settle quickly to work, continue their own conversations, or seek ways to bring attention to themselves. Almost all staff are working well to promote positive relationships but need to be better supported in tackling instances where young people do not follow instructions. The headteacher, senior and middle leaders, with the support from Dundee City Council, need to significantly strengthen their approaches to responding to behavioural issues both within and outwith classes. This remains an

important area for improvement. Young people in the ESA feel well supported and learn in a calmer environment.

**Develop more robust plans, building on the ‘Baldragon Way’, to improve learning and teaching across the school. This should ensure that all young people benefit from high-quality learning and teaching that meets their needs effectively.**

Staff have worked well with senior leaders and Dundee City Council officers to outline the features of high-quality learning and teaching through the creation of the Pupil Voice Classroom Commitment. As a result, there is a greater consistency across the school in teachers sharing the purpose of learning and what successful learning looks like. However, the use of learning intentions and success criteria is not of a consistently high enough quality across the school. This is impacting on young people having an understanding of how to progress their learning.

Teachers working within their departments, supported by middle leaders, should focus on planning tasks and activities set at the right level of difficulty for young people. There are too many lessons where young people would benefit from greater levels of challenge in their learning. This includes practice within the ESA. Teachers need better access to information about young people who require additional support needs and prior attainment levels to support them to plan learning appropriately. There are features of highly effective practice that could be further shared and built upon across the school. Staff should work within their departments to plan tasks and activities that are relevant, motivating and set at the right level of difficulty for young people.

**Work with staff from the local authority to improve attainment as an immediate priority across the school, especially in S4, by S5 and by S6.**

Staff have been working well to improve the progress of their learners. As a result, there are a few areas where attainment has shown early signs of improvement. This includes improvements in literacy and numeracy attainment for leavers, including those who require additional support in their learning. Standards of attainment remain low in several measures with some declines evident. There are a few departments that are performing well but the number of young people presented for National 5 and Higher needs to increase. Senior leaders acknowledge that attainment still requires significant improvement, and should work with staff to improve attainment as an immediate priority across the school, especially in S4, by S5 and by S6.

**Continue to develop effective approaches across the school that assist staff in reviewing regularly all young people’s progress and in providing appropriate support that meets all young people’s needs.**

Senior leaders have developed more effective approaches across the school that assist staff in reviewing young people’s progress in the senior phase. Departments across the school now have a more robust approach to analysing their examination results and meet with senior leaders to discuss performance. There are more regular meetings between middle and senior leaders to discuss attainment. Middle leaders should strengthen arrangements for monitoring progress through the BGE. There should also be clear expectations for all staff in how they use this data to help inform approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment. This improved approach should assist with planning tasks and activities that are set at the right level of difficulty.



Senior leaders have prioritised child protection and re-launched the school's approaches to child protection. All staff have successfully completed the e-learning module on child protection and safeguarding. As a result, all staff understand fully how to apply the school's procedures relating to child protection and safeguarding. Overall, young people report an improved sense of safety within the school building as a result of improved supervision and security. Principal Teachers of Guidance should continue as planned to discuss with individual young people within their house teams reasons for not feeling safe. In addition, all staff should continue to support those young people who feel that their sense of safety is compromised. Senior leaders and Principal Teachers of Guidance have worked closely with staff to adopt a stronger, consistent stance in relation to promoting anti-bullying and in dealing effectively and timeously with incidences of bullying.

### **What happens next?**

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Dundee City Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We are maintaining contact with the school and will carry out a progress visit within 6 months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Dundee City Council the details of this visit. Following the visit, we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Teri McIntosh  
HM Inspector

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