

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4 DECEMBER 2024

REPORT ON: EDUCATION SCOTLAND (HMI) RETURN VISIT – BALDRAGON ACADEMY

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 342-2024

1 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 June 2024.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:
- a notes the contents of this report; and
 - b instructs the Chief Education Officer to monitor progress towards meeting the areas for improvement outlined in the report.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In January 2023, a team of His Majesty's (HM) Inspectors from Education Scotland visited Baldragon Academy. This was a short model inspection, focused only on two quality indicators as well as safeguarding. Education Scotland published a report of their findings in June 2023.
- 4.2 HM Inspectors undertook a return visit in June 2024 to look at how the school had continued to improve its work in relation to these quality indicators; these return visits were in partnership with the Children and Families Service and Education Scotland following the initial inspection in January 2023. Education Scotland published a report of HM Inspectors' findings on 10 September 2024.

5 KEY INSPECTION FINDINGS

Key areas of progress

- 5.1 The senior leadership team has continued to improve their processes and procedures to carefully monitor and support young people's attendance at school.
- 5.2 Senior leaders have introduced additional effective measures to address incidents of late coming to school and classes and guidance staff and house leads monitor late coming more robustly. As a result, young people are now more aware of the impact of late coming on their learning.
- 5.3 The relationships policy is providing greater clarity to staff and young people about the differences in acceptable and unacceptable behaviours across the school. The new clear warning and lunchtime reflection processes are having a positive impact across the school. Teachers report that this approach is impacting positively on most young people.
- 5.4 The culture and ethos in Baldragon are now more positive for the school community. There are fewer young people who are disengaged or demonstrating high levels of challenging behaviour in classes.
- 5.5 The Pupil Voice Classroom Commitment statement is now established as the set of expectations for all staff and young people to work towards in learning.

- 5.6 Staff value the support of the Children and Families Service's Pedagogy Team, as this has improved professional learning opportunities.
- 5.7 Within the Educational Support Area, lessons for those young people identified as having specific support needs are well-organised and led by enthusiastic and caring teachers. Almost all young people access enjoyable lessons in the mainstream part of the school.
- 5.8 Staff continue to monitor and track the progress of young people. They have developed more effective approaches to review progress of young people in the senior phase more regularly and robustly.
- 5.9 Senior leaders have developed a more robust presentation policy in the senior phase. The number of entries of young people across most subjects at National 5 and in the majority of subjects at Higher has increased in 2023-2024.

Areas for Improvement

- 5.10 Teachers should ensure that the lessons provided for young people are stimulating, motivating and relevant. They should also continue to work on planning activities which are well paced, meet the needs of all young people, and set at the right level of challenge.
- 5.11 Designated support staff should continue to maintain high levels of visibility in all the areas where young people loiter in groups, particularly in toilet areas and meeting points across the school.
- 5.12 Whilst progress has been made in addressing the attendance and behaviour of young people, Senior leaders and staff should continue to further improve young people's attendance, attitudes to learning and behaviour.
- 5.13 Teachers should be encouraged and supported to be more creative and innovative in their approaches to teaching and evaluate the difference this makes to young people. This will support effective practice across the school and offer young people learning experiences which are more motivating and stimulating.
- 5.14 Progress has been made in supporting professional learning and in developing a structure for collaborative planning. Staff should continue to work within their departments to plan tasks and activities that are relevant, motivating and set at the right level of difficulty for young people.

6 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 HM Inspectors wrote to parents and carers following their most recent visit to report their view that Baldragon has made clear progress since the original inspection.
- 6.2 The school's improvement plan and progress, some of which is outlined in Section 5 above, is continuing to impact positively on attainment outcomes for Baldragon's pupils. For example, in 2023, 14% of 160 S4 pupils achieved 5 or more awards at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 5 or higher. As a result of key strategic changes and improvements, including 5.9 above, 33% of 172 S4 pupils achieved 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or higher. In fact, 17% of these pupils achieved 6 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or higher, compared to 4% in 2023. In 2023, 29% of the S6 (63 pupils) year group achieved 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or higher. This increased to 49% of S6 (59 pupils) in 2024.
- 6.3 The school recognises that attainment still requires improvement, as the HM Inspector report notes. The Head Teacher works very closely with the Children and Families Service's education senior leadership team to implement, monitor and refine the school's agile improvement plan to ensure that improvement actions impact positively on outcomes for pupils.
- 6.4 Education Scotland will liaise with the Children and Families Service to arrange a further visit by September 2025. Baldragon Academy 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.

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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.

8 CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The Council Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its content.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

Audrey May
Executive Director

Paul Fleming
Head of Education, Learning and Inclusion

November 2024

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10 September 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. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work and published another letter in March 2024. 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. 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.

Senior leaders, with staff, should improve young people's attendance, attitudes to learning and behaviour.

There are clear improvements in this area of work.

The senior leadership team has continued to improve their processes and procedures to carefully monitor and support young people's attendance at school. Guidance staff, in collaboration with senior leaders, are able to identify and address attendance issues more promptly. Senior leaders and staff recognise that attendance remains below the national average and should continue with their planned work to address this issue.

Senior leaders have also introduced additional effective measures to address incidents of young people arriving late in school and class. Guidance staff and house leads now monitor late coming more robustly. They are better placed to identify and challenge those who arrive late repeatedly. As a result, young people are now more aware of the impact of late coming on their learning. Senior leaders should continue to address young people who loiter across the school day.

A recently refreshed relationships policy is supporting all staff and young people to have greater clarity about acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in class. The new clear warning and lunchtime reflection processes are having a positive impact across the school. Teachers report that this approach is impacting positively on most young people and enables restorative and reflective conversations to take place. Young people are beginning to settle more quickly into lessons. Low-level disruption has reduced and there are now calmer environments for learning across the school.

Teachers should continue to work on planning activities which are well paced, meet the needs of all young people and which are set at the right level of challenge. The culture and ethos in Baldrigon are more positive for the school community. There are fewer young people who are disengaged or demonstrating high levels of challenging behaviour in classes. However, there is still work to be done on developing an ambitious aspirational culture of learning.

The headteacher and his senior team have changed the location of their offices. They are now distributed strategically across the school, making them more visible to young people and to staff. This is supporting the leadership team to be more fully aware of any support and interventions that young people may need across the course of the school day.

The deputy headteacher is working closely with young people and the families of those attending specialist provision at Baldrigon Academy. Senior leaders have restructured where and how extra support is provided. They now provide dedicated resources, such as extra rooms and staffing. This is supporting young people to improve their attitude to learning and behaviour. Senior leaders have developed and implemented bases throughout the school to work exclusively with groups of young people with distinct support needs. This is supporting identified groups of young people well to attend more regularly and with increased enthusiasm.

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.

Teachers are working collaboratively in departments, supported by middle leaders, to plan more effectively, learning which is set at the right level of difficulty for young people. This is supporting young people to be more motivated and engaged in their lessons. In the senior phase, young people are being censored more accurately and experiencing learning which is more appropriately challenging and relevant.

The 'Relationships for Learning' policy is beginning to support improvements in learning and teaching. Staff and young people report a clearer understanding of the standards they are working towards in learning and behaviour. There is now greater consistency in the application of these standards in lessons across the school. Young people are being supported well to demonstrate improved behaviour and attitudes to learning across all areas of the school. The school should continue to develop relationships for learning to further ensure a positive environment for learning. They should continue to promote and support higher expectations and higher standards in all lessons.

The Pupil Voice Classroom Commitment statement is now established as the set of expectations for all staff and young people to work towards in learning. This streamlined set of standards is helpful in clarifying expectations in lessons for all staff and young people. School leaders and staff should further develop how they collect and record the opinions of young people. They should make this a regular feature of self-evaluation activities related to teaching and learning. It is important that young people are able to express their views about their learning and are clear about how their views are taken into account.

The purpose of learning, and what young people need to do to be successful, are made clear by most teachers. Teachers should now support young people to identify for themselves what success in learning looks like. This will further support young people's engagement and motivation in lessons. The next step should be to systematically share examples of effective practice within the teaching team.

Within the Enhanced Provision, lessons for those young people receiving additional support are well-organised and led by enthusiastic and caring teachers. Class sizes have increased. This is helping young people to work co-operatively with their peers and build their social

skills. Almost all young people access enjoyable lessons in the mainstream part of the school. In most enhanced support lessons, young people are engaged well, and teaching approaches are matched to the needs of individuals. Teachers and support staff now enable young people to demonstrate more independence in their learning. Lessons and activities are set at a more appropriate level and based on young people's interests.

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.

All staff recognise that attainment still requires improvement.

Staff continue to monitor and track the progress of young people. They have developed more effective approaches to review progress of young people in the senior phase more regularly and robustly. They are developing processes to track and monitor progress of young people in all curricular areas in the Broad General Education (BGE).

Senior leaders and staff are very aware of the need to improve attainment for all young people and at all levels across the school, both in the S1-3 within the BGE and in the senior phase. There remains an ongoing concern about the attainment of young people overall, and in particular departments in relation to high quality passes at National 5 and Higher. Senior leaders are now working more closely with principal teachers and faculty heads to analyse the information they gather about young people's progress in learning. Staff have an increased focus on how best to improve young people's attainment and support all young people to achieve their maximum potential.

Teachers offer a range of support for young people including supported study and holiday revision sessions. Young people appreciate the additional support that is on offer to help them achieve success in their forthcoming Scottish Qualifications Authority assessments.

Senior leaders have developed more robust approaches to coursing young people in the senior phase. The number of entries of young people across most subjects at National 5 and in the majority of subjects at Higher has increased in 2023-2024. For example, there has been a 58% increase in presentations at National 5 Maths and a 22% increase in presentations at National 5 English. This is a very positive step. The implementation of the presentation policy will ensure that more young people are being presented for qualifications at the appropriately challenging level.

Most young people accessing enhanced support are working at the BGE level. Senior leaders should carefully consider how young people moving into the senior phase will access appropriate subject choices and personalisation as they move through the school.

What happens next?

The school has made clear progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Dundee City Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within one year of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Dundee City Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school, we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Teri McIntosh
HM Inspector