

Standards and Quality Report

2021/22

Inverness Royal Academy

HIGHLAND COUNCIL | CULDUTHEL ROAD, INVERNESS IV2 6RE

This report is provided to families and partners to identify our achievements this session. The next steps in our improvement journey are also outlined.

Throughout the year we continuously evaluate what we do and how it makes a difference to our learners. We want to know what is working well for our school community and what needs further improvement.

Our children and young people are actively consulted and involved in this process. We also give staff, parents/carers, and other partners the opportunity to participate in discussions and activities in order to shape our improvement journey.

When we develop our improvement projects we use key questions at planned review times throughout the session in order to know how well we are progressing towards achieving these positive outcomes and changes.

Our School

Inverness Royal Academy is a non-denominational, comprehensive school, situated on the south side of the city of Inverness. The school has a roll of approximately 1300 pupils and takes pupils through all stages of the secondary curriculum through S1-S6.

Inverness Royal Academy is the designated Gaelic medium secondary school for Inverness with a number of subjects being taught through the medium of the Gaelic Language. The number of Gaelic Medium Education (G.M.E.) pupils at Inverness Royal Academy continues to grow. Currently there are 129 pupils in the Gaelic secondary school provision but many more have experienced Gaelic Medium Education at some point in their time at the school.

The school has three provisions to meet additional learning and development needs. The enhanced provision ('West Wing') caters for young people from across the city. These young people have a range of additional support needs, including autism. 'The Bothy' provides individual nurturing interventions for young people in S1-S6. This is to reduce social and emotional barriers to learning. Recently we opened an additional base 'The Shieling' to further strengthen inclusion (including those at risk of financial exclusion) and to encourage those young people with attendance concerns to return to school following traumatic periods of absence, including lockdowns.

Staffing was a major challenge in Session 2021-2022, both in terms of absence related to the Covid 19 pandemic but also in relation to the Highland Council staffing formula -the lowest allocation of the 32 local authority areas in Scotland- that results in our school having up to 14 fewer teachers compared to an equivalent sized school in other local authority areas. If we were to have those fourteen additional teachers it would result in 11,800 more teaching hours every academic year.

The true commitment to achieving equity and raising attainment, as premised in such publications as the *National Improvement Framework (2020)* and *Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education (2016)* publications means that this imbalance needs to be addressed. Rebased school staffing allocations to be transparent and in line with national standards remains a part of Highland Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22. The reality, however, is that staffing allocations for secondary schools have actually been reduced further over this period.

Vacancy management controls have inevitably led to an increased reliance on supply cover bringing with it increased cost but, more importantly for pupils, lessons not being covered by subject specialists.

The greatest impact of vacancy management has been in our Additional Support Needs department. Budget cuts first implemented four years ago, combined with a lack of a meaningful staffing formula, process means that key positions such as A.S.N. Teachers and Pupil Support Assistants have not been filled. Existing staff's workload has increased and we signalled to central officers that we are fast approaching the point where we will have to send young people home because we cannot safely meet their needs.

Although staff are heavily committed to seeking additional support for young people, including with external partners, this is not always straightforward. Unfilled vacancies and lengthy waiting lists for services from partner agencies inevitably impact upon young people's health and wellbeing. These include Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services; educational psychology; children services workers; social work practice leads and primary mental health workers. As a result, young people's access to appropriate pathways of support is negatively affected.

During this session we put ourselves forward for an H.M.I.E. Recovery Visit.

The visit- which was co-constructed by the Rector and Lead Inspector- took place between the 25th and the 27th of April 2022 and focussed on:

- the continuity of learning;
- the wellbeing of children, young people and staff
- safeguarding and Child Protection

Our School Vision, Values and Aims

Our core values are Commitment, Compassion, Honesty, Respect & Responsibility and we expect our young people to model these in every aspect of their lives. Inverness Royal Academy and the foundation of the school and the grammar school that predated its royal warrant in 1792 were based on the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment, which gave central importance to our ability to solve problems through the use of reason.

That optimistic belief in the ability of people to bring about change for the better in society and nature holds as true for us now in the 21st century as it did in the school in the 18th century. Our approach is to offer a wide variety of learning opportunities with the aim of engaging every young person so that they are excited by learning and enjoy their time at school. Learning is at the centre of all we do and we aim to encourage all of our young people to become independent, creative and confident learners.

One of our primary aims is to encourage each student to be a self-confident, inquiring, tolerant, positive young person. We hope to help develop each young person into a well-rounded character with an independent mind who respects the differences of others.

By the time they leave school, we want every young person to have that true sense of self-worth that will enable them to make their mark and make a difference and, in doing so, to be of value to society.

At Inverness Royal Academy, we strive to bring out the best in all of our pupils. In pursuing broad aims, we intend to contribute significantly to the preparation of pupils for various adult roles in society, namely continuing education, employment, leisure, parenthood and citizenship.

We also hope to give them a sense of the heritage that stems from their Scottish, and, in particular, Highland environment including the place of the Gaelic language. We also want them to be aware of the long traditions of the school, while at the same time fostering awareness of the place of our society in the wider international community.

Our overall evaluation of the school's capacity for continuous improvement:

Our capacity for continuous improvement, like that of every school in the country, has been affected by periods of disruption caused by the Covid-19 situation. The pressure resulting from this- particularly relating to staff illness/self-isolation- has restricted our ability to complete planned improvements and to evaluate the effectiveness of changes we have made. Much of our work in session 2022/2023 will be to further rebuild our capacity for improvement and to make sure that we recover fully from the disruption caused by Covid-19.

Pupil Voice: what is working well in our school?

Our children and young people identified the following strengths for our school this session:

- ✓ Positive Relationships with staff
- ✓ The dialogue with teachers about their learning
- ✓ The school's counselling offer
- ✓ Curriculum Redesign
- ✓ 'The Bothy'
- ✓ Having an adult with whom they can discuss their concerns
- ✓ Well Established L.G.B.T. group
- ✓ Unicef Rights Respecting Schools Award Group

Pupil Voice: what changes would you like to see made?

Our children and young people identified the following changes they would like to see and the difference these changes could make.

- The development of Pupil Voice by, for example, a reconstituted Pupil Council. We are planning a potential model where Pupil Councils are set up using our House Group system i.e. one council per each of our five Houses. Each House Council will be chaired by House Captains from the Student Leadership team, with the relevant Principal Teacher of Guidance and Depute Rector in attendance.
- As well as dealing with pupil concerns, each House Council will contribute to establishing/further developing the identity of each House. House Captains could be given the responsibility of enrolling members at assembly and House Group time, and be given the responsibility of arranging meetings, agenda items and minutes. We could buy/ move notice boards to a visible area so that each House Group has one to advertise events plus acknowledge success and achievement of their house collectively or as individuals.
- The ability to access support from other services and the positive impact that would have on their health and wellbeing.
- Survey all pupils about issues such as learning and teaching and health & wellbeing and analyse the results via a dashboard to identify areas for improvement and areas that are working well.

Our Improvement Journey Headlines Session 2021/22

These projects are linked to the vision and priorities for Scottish Education based on delivering excellence and equity. Parent/Carer information is available [here](#).

Improvement Project 1: Health & Wellbeing

Primary focus: School Improvement

Year of Project: 1/2

Purpose:

- Support young people's mental health & emotional wellbeing
- Continue to aspire to become a Nurture School
- Deploy nurture staff to support young people at risk of exclusion
- Build on the UN. Rights Respecting Schools Silver Award by achieving Gold status
- Expand use of Google Tools for Education to monitor attendance & late coming.

Progress and impact

- ✓ Establishment of 'The Shieling'
- ✓ Significant Numbers of young people accessing the school's counselling service
- ✓ Impact of Google Tools for Education in establishing a Tracking, Monitoring & Reporting Dashboard.
- ✓ Staff have taken forward actions to reduce the impact of poverty.
- ✓ The Rector created new roles to reduce barriers to learning and development. This included appointing a Strategic Lead for Attendance, Attainment and Inclusion and a Children Services Worker to act as an Inclusion Support Worker to work with families on all aspects of inclusion, including financial aspects. Teachers should continue to be rigorous in their checking of attendance and punctuality.
- ✓ Staff have access to confidential counselling, as well as checks by the Senior Leadership Team. Staff are working hard to increase young people's levels of engagement, social skills, and abilities to work in teams. Young people's participation in physical education outdoors is having a positive effect on wellbeing.
- ✓ Staff have collaborated with a range of partners so that young people who attend The Outward-Bound Trust receive the SCQF Level 5 Adventure & Challenge Award.
- ✓ Young people in S4 attend a well-established off-school site partnership with the charity Day 1
- ✓ Young people attended the on-site partnership with the Motivation, Commitment and Resilience (MCR) Pathway. This combined mentoring and a foundation apprenticeship.
- ✓ Our staff use holistic approaches to identify barriers to learning at key transition stages and liaise with children before leaving Primary 7. This ensures that, if needed, our pupils can access timely, targeted support to overcome social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- ✓ Our Staff in The Bothy use nurturing approaches to provide early and effective support for young people. The resulting impact includes improved friendships, confidence, resilience and learning.
- ✓ Whole school staff training on attachment theory and nurture delivered by the Nurture and Inclusion Lead
- ✓ Whole staff training 'Equally Safe at School'
- ✓ **Very good progress was made in this area.**

Next steps:

- Staff will continue to be rigorous in their checking of attendance and punctuality.
- We will establish a school food & clothing bank
- Staff will benefit from further professional learning on restorative practice/trauma informed practice.
- Staff should continue to support each other's wellbeing.
- Establish steering group for ESAS

Improvement Project 2: Recovery of learning, teaching and assessment

Primary focus: Performance Information/School Improvement

Year of Project: 2022/2023

Purpose:

- **Continue to improve Tracking, monitoring & Recording System**
- **Pilot 'Teaching Sprints'**

Progress and impact:

- ✓ The Depute Rector whose remit it is, has developed a powerful integrated attainment data tool to track, monitor and report on young people's progress. This has provided significant insight into assessment and attainment in the Senior Phase and is beginning to enable a deeper analysis of attainment in the Broad General Education

Next steps:

- Staff should track all groups of learners' progress, for example care experienced, young carers or those who have transferred from Gaelic to English Medium. The latter still need to be supported in developing their fluency.
- Staff should develop a strategic overview of young people's skills from personal and wider achievements, and their recognition through awards. The Strategic Lead for Attainment & Inclusion will lead on this.
- Roll out 'Teaching Sprints' on whole school level
- Continue to expand our use of the TMR system and to develop a more refined Dashboard for analysing the data we gather.

✓ *Good progress was made in this area.*

**Improvement Project 3:
Attainment in session 21/22 (focusing on identifying new or widened gaps caused by the Covid-19 situation)**

Primary focus: School Improvement

Year of Project: 1

Purpose:

- Carry out a review of our curriculum
- Explore the production and use of a Dashboard to bring attainment, attendance and other relevant data together to allow us to better track progress and target individuals for support/intervention.
- Refine our PEF strategy to further improve the impact on attendance, attainment and achievement.
- Our senior groups 'Bespoke' and the Personal Development group for Session 2021-2022 aim to give pupils more support enabling them to achieve and get recognition for wider achievement.
- Use PEF funds to support numeracy interventions

Progress and impact:

- ✓ Senior leaders have produced a detailed senior phase attainment plan to reduce gaps. A newly appointed A.S.G. Depute has begun to take forward focused work with associated primaries aimed at raising attainment. This should increase the impact of projects in S1-S3 on literacy and numeracy. For this, staff are creating assessments in phonics, reading and comprehension.
- ✓ A Depute Rector has led a collaborative group to consult on and review the curriculum. This has resulted in new courses and opportunities being available this session. This includes Foundation Apprenticeships and the increased use of the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF).
- ✓ The school was awarded Bronze Ambassador status by the S.C.Q.F.

Next steps:

- A similar attainment plan will be developed for the Broad General Education.
- We reflect on embedding a shared rationale for the curriculum to support further recovery and beyond. This should unpack where there are remaining gaps in the planned curriculum.
- Senior leaders will focus on our school aims so that they are drivers of change.
- Gaelic will develop a contemporary focus.
- Continue to expand our use of the TMR system and to develop a more refined Dashboard for analysing the data we gather.
- Nurture & inclusion Lead to roll out 'Amazing Things 5' Youth Achievement Awards'

✓ ***Good progress was made in this area.***

Gàidhlig / Gaelic Medium Education

Primary focus: Development of Gàidhlig

Year of Project: 1

Purpose:

Progress and impact:

- ✓ Gaelic Medium pupils engage with partners to support their learning and fluency.
- ✓ The uneven distribution of pupil numbers in classes can make regular, quality adult interaction with individual young people challenging.
- ✓ Significant enrichment activities to develop pupils' fluency

Next steps:

- Our Young people in Gaelic Medium Education require continued total immersion to build further their confidence, skills, and fluency.
- Teachers of Gaelic Medium Education are looking at ways to enable all young people, who have learned through Gaelic, to leave school with a qualification and/or award in Gàidhlig.
- Development of Higher Eachdraidh

✓ ***Good progress was made in this area.***

Evaluation of Progress

We believe we have made the following progress this session:

Quality Indicator	School self-evaluation
Leadership of Change	1.3 Good
Learning, teaching and assessment	2.3 Good
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	3.1 Good
Raising attainment and achievement	3.2 Good

Our overall evaluation of our school's capacity for continuous improvement is:

Good

Planning Ahead

Full details of the school's 2022/23 improvement priorities and actions are detailed on the school improvement plan, which can be accessed on our website or by contacting the school office.

<https://www.invernessroyalacademy.org.uk/>