

The table below sets out the actions taken to address the recommendations following the HMIE visit in June 2024.

Extract from HMIE Letter	Actions taken since most recent HMIE visit
<p>Priority Area 1: Streamline approaches to improvement so that self-evaluation activities clearly identify priorities which will make the biggest difference to outcomes for young people.</p>	
<p><i>The local authority needs to take prompt and urgent action to address the significant weaknesses in the leadership of the headteacher</i></p> <p><i>Staff remain unclear about current improvement priorities with a majority still feeling that they are not fully involved in devising and leading priorities. There remains a need for senior leaders to involve the school community to have a greater role in identifying, leading and evaluating school improvement.</i></p> <p><i>Senior leaders need to simplify and streamline school improvement priorities, so these are coherent and well understood across the school. They need to ensure that these priorities are clear and measurable in terms of improving learners' experiences.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interim Acting Head Teacher, who already had knowledge of the school, has been in place at Harlaw Academy since June 2024. This provided stability and an opportunity to proactively respond to the verbal feedback received from HMIE during the inspection. Since the week of the inspection on 10th June he has helped drive the changes required and there is considerable early evidence of rapid progress against the HMIE recommendations. • The interim Acting Head Teacher has been provided with an experienced Head Teacher mentor (who is also an Associate Assessor). This mentoring is on a 1-1 basis with meetings every three weeks and supports a quad arrangement where Harlaw Academy join with Bucksburn, Hazlehead and St. Machar Academies for more informal support and collaboration. • The three DHTs have been provided with support from individuals with Head Teacher experience to build their capacity and capability. • SLT remits have been clarified to ensure they align clearly to leadership of the Quality Indicators and priorities for the school. • A set of key school improvement priorities were shared with staff in June 2024 and progress continues to be shared. These key priorities have also been shared with the Parent Council both in June 2024 and at their AGM in September 2024. • Survey responses from 55 out of 87 members of staff (27th August) showed that almost all staff felt that there was a clarity to these priority areas and that they understood them. Almost all staff also believed that there was a clarity to the 'plan on a page' and its links to QIs 1.3, 2.3, & 3.2. Almost all staff also believed that the Harlaw Academy 'plan on a page' aligns with the previous findings of HMIE and from local authority QI visits. • Feedback from the parent council, after a meeting in June 2024 and a further meeting in September 2024, has demonstrated broad agreement over the new direction of the school and the narrowing of objectives towards key areas that link into the inspection process. • Following consultation with staff, and to strengthen ownership and involvement, the school have established working groups that give

	<p>groups, will be refining these policies so that these are ready for the start of session 25-26.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans are in place to engage young people in helping to lead a review of the vision and values of Harlaw Academy.
<p>Priority Area 2: Continue to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment so that young people's experiences engage them and meet their needs. Develop more fully an ethos for learning with high expectations and mutual respect.</p>	
<p><i>There remains a need to develop more fully an ethos for learning with high expectations and mutual respect.</i></p> <p><i>The implementation of the framework remains inconsistent and has not improved learners' experiences sufficiently enough.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers should review how they meet the needs of young people in the class.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The imperative to improve learning, teaching and assessment at Harlaw Academy has been hampered by the fact that <i>staff do not feel their views are taken into account</i> which is leading to an impact on <i>staff morale</i>. This has presented itself most prominently in the way the purpose of lesson observations have been communicated and received by staff. To begin the work of building back confidence and understanding of purpose, a pause on formal observations has been introduced up to December 2024. There is evidence that the top-down approach to improving learning and teaching had not realised improvement and staff report having insufficient time to reflect on and respond to guidance and advice given. Faculty learning walks and support activity has continued. The refreshed Learning & Teaching Working Group has started work to provide more clarity on the framework of identifying the characteristics of high quality learning and teaching at Harlaw Academy. The learning and teaching framework outlines clear expectations around lesson planning, engagement, and student respect, creating an environment that supports high standards and academic rigor. Visits have taken place from the DHT responsible for Learning & Teaching (L&T) and the L&T Faculty Head to Aberdeen Grammar School to discover what is working well within that school. Learning gleaned has been shared with the L&T working group and a redrafted learning and teaching framework is almost at the stage to be shared with staff and young people for comment. To support teacher empowerment to ensure improvements in pedagogy, each teacher has created their own individual action plan. These have been shared with Faculty Heads and the professional learning requirements collated by school leaders to create a programme reflecting these themes to run during session 2024-25. Taking this approach will help build greater ownership. Within individual plans, almost all staff have identified and welcome informal observations of classes from peers or the Faculty Head. A record of classroom observations is being kept to enable the highlighting of commonality across the school and also areas which require greater focus. In Term 2 teaching staff will update their

	<p>individual action plan and demonstrate the next steps that they wish to build into improving their pedagogy for terms 3 and 4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training around observations and questioning techniques has been provided to Faculty Heads as part of established fortnightly middle leadership sessions. The training on questioning techniques is now being rolled out to staff. • The launch of the new <i>PupilTracking</i> system to support monitoring, tracking and intervention is supporting staff to review how well they meet the needs of young people in the class. • Harlaw Academy have started to share with greater transparency the levels that pupils have achieved both in the BGE and in the senior phase. Lists of pupils have also been broken down into the top 20% - middle 60% - and bottom 20% of young people. This will provide a greater understanding of what pupils require greater planning for their individualised learning. • Pupil assemblies now occur most weeks in the school. This is an opportunity for the senior leaders to reinforce high expectations with all young people. There is also the opportunity for other staff and pupils to lead these assemblies in the longer term. • The interim relationships policy centres around how positive relationships between staff and pupils is vital to the progress of our young people. There is evidence that following the implementation faculty heads are accepting more responsibility for the maintenance of positive pupil relationships in their classes and faculties with less calls on senior leaders. • For the small number of young people who can demonstrate dysregulated behaviours, more coherent and reviewed plans agreed with parents/carers and partners are in place to support their learning with the involvement of outside partners where needed.
<p>Priority Area 3: Strengthen approaches to monitoring young people’s progress across all subject areas so that staff at all levels have a clear overview of learners’ progress. Continue to raise attainment of young people at all stages.</p>	
<p><i>There is a continued need to strengthen approaches to monitoring young people’s progress across all subject areas. Staff at all levels do not yet have a clear overview of learners’ progress.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new monitoring and tracking system, PupilTracking, has been introduced this session. This is being used in all year groups and enabling the sharing of more timely reporting to parents and carers – 4 times per school session – so that they are informed more regularly about the progress of young people. • All staff have been trained in how to use the system. There has also been additional training for FHs as part of the school’s fortnightly middle leader training sessions. The focus of these sessions has been on how data can be used to plan and implement interventions that will improve pupil performance to ensure that every student receives the support they need.

Young people are achieving at lower levels at Harlaw Academy across almost all national measures compared to learners with similar needs and backgrounds across Scotland.

There is an urgent need to improve young people's attainment in the senior phase across all measures.

Senior leaders need to review the number of courses young people are presented for in both S4 and S5, including dual presentation as

- There is a more transparent sharing of any prior attainment data that is held on the young people of Harlaw Academy allowing staff to see which pupils are underperforming within their classes as well as those young people who require specific support in their learning.
- With particular focus on literacy and numeracy, Harlaw Academy are implementing targeted interventions and adjusting teaching strategies where needed. Literacy and numeracy data is now tracked in all year groups. There is a specific focus on the S4-S6 group. In particular any S4 leaver is tracked to ensure that they are achieving the highest possible Literacy and Numeracy level at their point of exit.
- Similarly, in S5 & S6 young people who are not studying English or Maths are also being tracked to ensure they also have the highest Literacy and Numeracy level at their point of exit.
- Staffing appointments have been made to the positions of Principal Teacher of Literacy and Principal Teacher of Numeracy. Their focus will be to work with the local Primary School to ensure alignment of levels and coursework as P7 pupils transition into S1. The broader focus will be on the Broad General Education (S1-S3) and the activities that will engage young people positively in classes.
- The Assessment Group has reviewed the number of courses available to S4 and S5 students to balance breadth with depth, ensuring that each student's course load supports their learning and attainment goals. This has been supported through a systematic review and refresh of processes has been undertaken to begin to meet the challenge to ensure that young people at Harlaw Academy achieve their full potential and are coursed appropriately.
- There is closer tracking of all pupils within the senior phase. Attainment reviews with middle leaders in school have focused on current classes rather than dwelling on the results from courses in 2023-2024. This is allowing the school and staff to be much more focused on the pupils who require support and interventions.
- A robust approach to a Presentation Policy will support procedures to ensure that young people achieve the 'highest and best'.
- The Assessment policy provides greater clarity of the expectations of class teachers, faculty heads, guidance teachers and Depute Heads. Pupils are discussed in the 1-1 meetings with Faculty Heads and their Depute Head link with next steps agreed which are then shared with class teacher via the Faculty Head.
- There is an understanding in all faculty areas that no pupil should leave a faculty in S4-S6 without achieving a qualification. This links to the closer tracking of young people so that they can be switched to a different course or level of course where they are more likely to

the school is not following national guidance.

be successful based on robust evidence of performance within classes

- Work continues to ensure that Harlaw Academy offers a curriculum that is broad and has a balance of breadth whilst maintaining a focus on ambition and 'highest and best'. This includes ensuring that young people at Harlaw Academy access consortium and city-wide curriculum offers.
- Consultation has been carried out to implement a change to the number of courses young people are presented for in S4, with a commitment to further review during session 2024-25. In session 24-25 S4 young people at Harlaw Academy will be in the main presented for 7 courses rather than the previous 8. From session 25-26 there will be a further reduction to 6 courses in S4 for the majority of the young people. This will enable young people to focus on achieving quality grades in a more refined number of courses. Historically data from the senior pupils of Harlaw Academy has demonstrated an insufficient number of young people achieving A & B passes in their National 5 courses in S4. This is also impacting the choices and success of these S4 pupils when they move into S5 and S6, as in Higher courses when a young person has achieved a C or D award they are unlikely to be successful. The depth of learning from the S4 pupils studying more than 6 subjects in S4 at Harlaw Academy has not been there.
- The curriculum staff working group is examining the number of courses available to our young people across the senior phase. This is with a view to increasing the number of courses available for pupils to choose from in S4-S6. The courses that the group are focusing on are at SQA Level 5 and Level 6 that focus on internal assessment rather than an examination.
- A robust understanding at school level now means that dual presentations will follow national guidance.
- To support focused improvement, a set of measurable outcomes has been identified by school leaders to ensure that progress against the HMle recommendations is tracked and made.
- Additional Pupil Support Assistants have been employed within the school. Interviews for additional Support for Learning (SFL) teachers are scheduled for later in November. This is in recognition that the number of staff who were working with pupils who had an additional support need was less than in many other schools. This is allowing for the Faculty Head of SFL to provide strategies to those young people who need an extra level of support.
- A focus of the fortnightly middle leader training with the Pastoral Support team has been around effective pupil pathway planning. The good practice that exists within other schools in Aberdeen has been shared. A clearer routine of supporting pathway discussions

	<p>with young people from S1 onwards is now in place. This will provide the young person and the school a greater knowledge of the direction that they wish to pursue during their time in school and also the area that they wish to pursue post-school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those young people in S4-S6 a clarity of expectations has been given over what is expected from Guidance staff to ensure that we have an awareness of the pathway that each pupil is pursuing and that the supports are in place to help every young person in Harlaw Academy to achieve their goal.
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QI	What the young people will experience	Measurable Outcomes	Activity	Owner
1.3	We want young people at Harlaw Academy to all experience a school that 'works' well for all of them, with everyone provided with the environment they need to flourish and be the best they can be, and the best version of themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff in school feeling actively involved, and understanding, the schools ongoing self-evaluation process through DMs, FSMs, and surveys and be clear over its intended positive impact on young people. Young people will have their views considered within the self-evaluation process via focus groups and surveys. There will be the creation of a wider range of working groups with an expectation that all staff will be on at least one working group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust analysis of attendance, attainment, and engagement data at faculty level in order to inform faculty plans Increase the opportunities for the whole education staff team to work collegiately together through staff meetings and in-service days. This will create a greater sense of ownership and understanding of the school's improvement priorities and how they will contribute to creating improved outcomes for young people. Provide greater opportunities for young people to share their views listened to and acted upon through the consistent creation of pupil focus groups using feedback to inform staff working groups. Create a number of key working groups, including: Better Relationships, Better Learning, Learning & Teaching, Curriculum, Tracking & Monitoring, and Crew. Other whole-school working groups will be created based on the suggestions that staff want to see and be part of in school. There will be 10 slots allocated over the course of the session for staff to engage in their working group so that every member of the school's education team is supporting whole school improvement to lead to better outcomes for our young people. 	SLT SA SLT SLT SC
2.3	Young people will experience greater challenge in classes and the extent to which they are encouraged to be ambitious leading to improved outcomes. There will be a focus on every teacher having an action-plan to address an area of their teaching practice leading to young people experiencing a higher standard of learning and teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proportion of lessons evaluated as 'good' or better will increase when formal class observations return in 2025 demonstrating an improvement in the experiences of our young people. Surveys of young people, parents and staff will demonstrate a belief in an improvement of the quality of teaching in the school will improve and be demonstrated within surveys. Staff demonstrating a greater sense of ownership of L&T and also the methods they can use to improve their practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity provided from the L&T working group over what makes an excellent lesson at Harlaw Academy. All staff will create an individual action plan to improve an area of their teaching practice. This will be shared with their Faculty Heads by the week beginning 23rd September. Staff will decide themselves the methodology they are using to improve their practice. This could be wider professional reading, peer observations, working in trios, FH observations, SLT observations etc. Training will be provided on the various methodology options that staff could utilise to improve their teaching practice within staff meetings and twilight sessions. There will be a pause in top-down observations from SLT and the LA until 2025. SLT observations of staff will return in January 2025 at which point we hope to see an overall improvement in the pedagogy and experiences of our young people from the implementation of individualised plans. 	DC DC DC DC SC SC
3.2	Young people will be encouraged to succeed through ambitious expectations, rigorous tracking with timely interventions, and a broader curricular offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5@5 in S4 M80% and H20% in S4 1@6 and 3@6 in S5 Young people will stay on at school in greater numbers especially in S6. Greater curriculum offer at Harlaw with alternative SCQF courses at level 5/6 for 2025-26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on evidence gathered, a change will be made to the S4 curriculum for 2024-25, with a focus on 7 rather than 8 subjects. Young people will be able to concentrate on fewer subjects and gain better grades in these thanks to a greater depth of learning. The presentation policy will be used to ensure that all stakeholders are ambitious for the success of our young people. Robust procedures will be in place to ensure that young people achieve the 'highest and best' qualifications. A new tracking and monitoring system will be in place to ensure that greater ambition is demonstrated for our young people. Staff are confident at identifying which pupils require intervention to ensure they meet the demands of the level they are completing. Focus on ensuring that young people have a broad range of courses to choose from within the curriculum to ensure they achieve their full potential at Harlaw Academy and stay on at school in greater numbers. 	LL SA SA SA SA/FH LL



Harlaw Academy Faculty/Department Improvement Planning



Harlaw Academy Faculty/Department Improvement Planning



Faculty/Department	English
Staff Lead:	Mr Smith (FH)
Other Staff Involved:	English Faculty
School Priority QI	1.3 ✓ 2.2 ✓ 2.3 ✓ 3.2 ✓
Plan Overview:	<p>(QI 1.3) Leadership and Staff Morale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff involvement with the school Relationships/Behaviour working group aims to offer support and strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour, identified in faculty meetings as a negative influence on staff morale. FH heavily involved in managing negative learning behaviours across the faculty, working one-to-one with students withdrawn from class, supporting positive reintegration measures, and delivering CPD related to behaviour management in faculty meetings. More broadly, FH aims to put strategies in place to maintain positive attainment trends after a successful set of exam results in 2024. <p>(QI 1.3) Greater Staff Empowerment and Working Groups + (QI 1.3) Greater Staff Involvement in Self-evaluation and School Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aiming to use faculty meetings to showcase excellent practice and quality resources from across the faculty, and beyond. Encourage participation in working groups and use Personal Action Plans to hold staff accountable for their own professional development. Grouping staff into pairs or trios, according to overlap in PAs, will allow for constructive, targeted observations to take place. <p><u>Personal action plans from English faculty members aim to address themes such as:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Differentiation</i> <i>Promoting engagement, pace and challenge</i> <i>Making the most of smartboards and other ICT</i> <i>Consolidating the delivery of alternative courses, such as Media and NPAs.</i> <i>Use of Oracy skills, including optimizing questioning in lessons</i> <i>Enhancing feedback protocols; offering feedback in a more diverse, efficient manner</i>

	<p>(QI 2.3) Learning and Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Again, facilitating lesson observations within the faculty as well as sharing good practice and conducting moderation at FMs will be central to our improvement. Renewed focus on assessment cycles, feedback protocols, and promoting positive learning behaviours are priority areas. <p>(QI 3.2) Whole-school Tracking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment calendar has been agreed upon in our opening meeting. Monitoring use of our centralized, SP tracker will allow for an overview of attainment in the faculty. FH has composed a list of 'At Risk' students, with the aim of securing some level of attainment for all. Additionally, looking to update the BGE tracker to make it more streamlined. Also looking to update BGE topsheets/markings matrices to ensure consistency; moderation of BGE work will also help to achieve this reliability in tracking across the department. <i>Other actions include lifting the standard for entry into a Higher English class, B+ at National 5.</i> <i>Level 6 Communication (already in place) and potentially L6 Scottish Studies, in the future, will offer a conduit for those students who are looking for an alternative Literacy pathway.</i> <i>Study support sessions to be put in place to support attainment.</i>
Activities and Timeline:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities detailed above. All to be put in place this session, with the exception of L6 Scottish Studies, which is a potential project for session '25/'26.
Milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully presenting L6 Communication candidates. Likely to be verified after first year of presentation, so aiming for "strong confidence" feedback from the SQA following that process. In terms of improving departmental behaviour standards, a key measure of success will be to see a reduced number of referrals (79 between starting in August and end of term 1 as FH). I would like to half this number between October and Christmas break. Staff testimony will also be used to gauge any shifts in behavioural standards across the department. Hoping to see a particular uplift in the RUAЕ prelin paper at N5 and Higher level, as we target this area of the SP course (identified as sub-optimal in attainment meeting). Maintaining positive trends in attainment at N5, whilst also looking to pull up RUAЕ to hit the national average. Looking to take overall Higher attainment up closer to national average.



Harlaw Academy Faculty/Department Improvement Planning



<p>Measures of Success:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff testimony, perhaps in a concluding FM, can give a measure of where things are at regarding staff morale. Planning to check-in with this at the end of each term, informally. Improving staff morale will help staff retention, resulting in consistent and high-quality delivery of courses. Naturally, staff wellbeing is worthwhile as an end in itself. - Looking to continue positive trends in N5 attainment, specifically targeting an uplift in RUAE, which has been stubbornly low, historically. Uplift in our N5 performances will better equip students moving on to level 6 courses and give students the best possible chance of positive destinations after their time at Harlaw is over. Getting more students into our '5@5' bracket is a key measure of success for our centre, one which the English faculty plays a key role in, with such a high proportion of senior students taking our course. - Looking to bring Higher results closer to the national comparison. Option of Level 6 Communication should improve attainment of Level 6 Literacy, whilst also offering an outlet to those students at risk for a N/A at Higher English. Looking to take N/As below 10% (15% last session). - Hoping to improve consistency of tracking and monitoring protocols. Updating the BGE tracker and feedback systems will improve reliability when it comes to gauging the level of BGE candidates. Easy consensus during moderation meetings and general uniformity between classes will help to evidence this. Accuracy of predicted grade vs actual grade will be a key measure of success for tracking systems across the Senior Phase. Accurate tracking systems across the BGE will help the faculty to launch attainment interventions as early as possible, to maximise the chances of making an impact on students' long-term attainment prospects. In turn, having a clear picture of where students are at by the end of S3 will help us to place students accurately into Senior Phase courses. Mapping optimal curricular pathways will help students to gain maximum value from their time in S4-S6.
<p>Review Date:</p>	
<p>Next Steps:</p>	<p>Actions detailed above. Ensuring the relevant staff are ready to deliver and assess L6 Communication, and tracking initiatives, are priority actions ahead of inspection in March/April.</p>