

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children's Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	30 March 2023
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Northfield Academy Inspection
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CFS/23/115
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Shona Milne
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.1, 1.1.6

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report shares the outcome of a recent inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) of Northfield Academy and details the work undertaken to secure improvement to date, and proposed improvement activity to support the school to move forward positively.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 approve the workplan contained in Appendix A as the Council's official response to the HMIE inspection report on Northfield Academy;
- 2.2 approve the governance framework available in Appendix B;
- 2.3 instructs the Interim Director Children and Family Services to implement the governance framework, including the establishment of an Advisory Group, to help drive improvements in the longer term;
- 2.4 instructs the Chief Education Officer to oversee the Tactical Team in their support of school improvement at Northfield Academy against the Core Quality Indicators;
- 2.5 instructs the Chief Education Officer to provide progress updates every two committee cycles through established Inspection reporting and include the outcome of any on-going engagement with Education Scotland including the conclusions from their return visit in 6 months and 18 months;
- 2.6 instructs the Head Teacher to routinely report progress to parents/carers and young people; and
- 2.6 instructs the Chief Education Officer to amend quality improvement arrangements for secondary schools to mitigate risk.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

#### Pre-inspection

- 3.1 In 2019, a review of data for Northfield Academy guided a period of intensive support to the then Head Teacher and then a subsequent change in school leader. A team of experienced school leaders were temporarily recruited to lead and help stabilise the school whilst recruitment for a new HT took place. The current HT took up post in March 2020 and led the school immediately into lockdown. The summarised inspection findings note that, ***'During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents felt well supported by the school in relation to the health and wellbeing of young people'***.
- 3.2 As Public Health restrictions lifted and staff and young people returned to school buildings, there were still considerable limitations on movement across and within schools in place. These restrictions limited opportunities for collaborative improvement and quality assurance work across the school. The restrictions resulted in adult to adult interactions generally being virtual. This was a very challenging environment for the new leadership of the school to cope with particularly as they faced the dual task of continuing to manage the communication associated with the pandemic whilst trying to manage the school's transition to its more recognisable "Business As Usual". These challenges inevitably impaired the ability of the new school leadership to undertake an assessment of all the systems, processes and practices in place across the school whilst of course having to respond to what was emerging post the national lockdowns.
- 3.3 The Head Teacher became acutely aware of the level of vacancy in the school and noted that staffing shortages were impacting on the ability to release staff for much needed development work. It was also noted that young people being taught by supply staff who didn't know them well was adding to the complexity of the situation. To give a sense of the scale of the challenge, as of March 2022 there were 10 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) vacant posts and 3 staff unable to attend due to having COVID-19 symptoms. This equated to around 20% of the teaching staff complement. The Head Teacher prioritised addressing the level of vacancy and worked with colleagues in People and Organisation to secure the appointment of permanent staff. By October 2022 the school had only one vacancy.
- 3.4 In keeping with national best practice, the Head Teacher led work on understanding trauma and making use of restorative practice to support staff to establish positive relationships with and proactively respond to the needs of young people as they emerged from the pandemic. Recognising that a wider range of support for wellbeing was required led to the establishment of new posts (Family Wellbeing Workers) in order to offer a wider range of interventions to support wellbeing at school level. Some partners such as Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust were commissioned to offer further supports.
- 3.5 In recognition that young people with some additional support needs (such as ADHD) had found the return to in-school learning challenging, work was undertaken with the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Foundation to improve approaches to supporting young people with ADHD at

Northfield Academy. There is early evidence of improvement across some key measures resulting from this work.

- 3.6 Plans were also made to roll out a national programme being used in most other secondary schools across Scotland called Mentors in Violence Prevention.
- 3.7 Northfield Academy was identified as appropriate for inclusion in the Local Authority Edge of Care Pilot as a result of the high number of young people who experience care who attend the school. Inclusion in this pilot provided an opportunity to increase the resource available to young people who may require a more flexible route through the curriculum and improvements in key measures are emerging from the pilots. Both pilots, which are overseen by the Chief Social Work and Education Officers, will be fully evaluated over this academic year with findings reported to Committee.
- 3.8 The Trade Unions raised concerns about staff wellbeing and the use of Stress Risk Assessments was agreed as a means of monitoring staff wellbeing. It has subsequently been agreed to utilise Stress Risk Assessments on a termly basis and time has been set aside in the Working Time Agreement (WTA) to support this process. Staff expressed that they didn't feel they had sufficient voice in the school and a staff voice group was established to provide a forum to address this alongside a range of working groups to help support delivery of the School Improvement Plan. Officers from the Education Service attended the school at prearranged times to be available to any staff who thought it helpful to engage directly with central officers.
- 3.9 The Trade Unions also raised concerns about the consistency of responses from school senior leaders when alerted to issues by teaching staff and requested that school senior leaders maintain contact with parents and carers exclusively rather than school middle leaders doing so. The senior leadership team worked to take account of this feedback in order to support staff wellbeing but this did take time from the development of more strategic approaches to improvement.
- 3.10 Local Authority quality assurance visits evidenced that there was a need to clarify expectations against How Good Is Our School and Central Officers delivered 5 bespoke professional learning sessions to the Senior Leadership team in order to enable them to lead work with the staff team. Officers shared successful approaches to the development of distributive leadership aligned to the Core Quality Indicators.
- 3.11 Local Authority Attainment Reviews held in 2022 highlighted the need for a clear Presentation Policy and a review of curriculum as a mechanism for raising attainment. Time was invested in helping the team better understand and generate the data required to inform their review of curriculum and development of a Presentation Policy.
- 3.12 Concerns were expressed by Trade Unions about the consistency and ease of health and safety reporting. Staff accessed Health and Safety training in how to report incidents and near misses and the school put in place more robust data monitoring arrangements. The Trade Unions sought further focus on the Relationships Policy and asked that the Relationships Policy be the

single area of focus in the school and then held a ballot on potential industrial action. Given the nature of the situation, the Head Teacher agreed with Trade Unions to focus exclusively on the on-going refinement of a Relationships policy for a period of time and delay other planned improvement work. This saw the school work in partnership with the Parent Council to clarify expectations in advance of school session 2023/24 and a programme of engagement with young people through assemblies to enable the agreed approach to be rolled out from August 2023. Central Officers continued to prioritise covering vacancies and supporting the Head Teacher and senior leaders to consider the remits required to secure improvement in the short, medium and longer term.

- 3.13 Officers regularly attended the school and engaged with young people to get a sense of their experience in school which was multi-faceted and was being impacted by a range of other factors. The young people identified a need to shift the narrative around their school and community and spoke of how they felt others across the city perceived them and how this impacted on their aspirations and options for the future. This triggered work to establish an 18 month arts programme entitled 'This is Northfield'. The programme is designed to help the young people have more control over what was said about their school and community in order to address how young people are impacted by the perceptions of others. It was determined that an intensive quality improvement visit would be helpful to support the comprehensive identification of next steps across all core Quality Indicators as the school broadened improvement work beyond the relationships policy.
- 3.14 In November 2022 the Local Authority activated the support network across the education service and secured the support of senior leaders from across city secondary schools to work in partnership with central officers to undertake a detailed quality improvement visit of Northfield Academy. This visit confirmed that performance against the Core Quality Indicators from How Good is our School? needed to improve, and highlighted that collegiality was not well developed. As a result, the team found that different groups of staff held different views on how the school should move forward positively and that this was likely to hamper progress. Additional management capacity was put in place to help support the school at this point and the team who had undertaken the quality improvement visit committed to supporting the school in the longer term.
- 3.15 Given the importance of getting all staff to work together to a common purpose and importance of moving the situation forward, the Head Teacher at Northfield Academy invited a long serving peer Head Teacher from an Aberdeen City school to act as impartial intermediary. This approach has been welcomed by members of staff/Trade Unions and remains in place. Inspectors noted the early positive impact of this approach.

#### The inspection

- 3.16 His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) visited Northfield Academy week beginning 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023. The inspection team spent the full week on site and reviewed a range of evidence to help them evaluate the work of the school against the core Quality Indicators from How Good Is Our School?

The inspection team spoke with groups of staff, young people, parents and carers as well as considering written and survey evidence available to them. The team also conducted a series of classroom visits to look at the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. As is common practice amongst external inspection bodies, informal feedback was shared verbally at the end of the inspection week.

- 3.17 The verbal feedback confirmed the significant work required against all of the core Quality Indicators. There was a clear sense that the school was 'overly traditional' and had not taken advantage of opportunities to amend operations to reflect the needs of the community as new courses and approaches were available for use over a large number of years. Inspectors noted the work being undertaken to bring the staff team together but recognised that this was yet to improve outcomes for learners.
- 3.18 Central Officers and school senior leaders guided staff through the verbal feedback from HMle. The findings understandably triggered a range of emotions in staff. Sharing the informal findings has helped to immediately focus the team on addressing the findings of the Inspection. The staff team are united in their desire to move the school forward at pace.

#### Responding to the verbal findings of the Inspection

- 3.19 Given the scale of improvement required, a large pool of expertise has been convened to support the school, this approach enhances further the approach the education service has taken to develop collaborative improvement over the last few years. This team is being referred to as the 'Tactical Team' and will have an on-going relationship with the school as the inspection findings are addressed. Almost all members of the Tactical Team were involved in the quality assurance visit of November '22 so have a clear sense of the improvements required. Given the scale of transformation required, the Tactical Team has used their considerable expertise to work with school senior leaders to structure a high level plan across 6 workstreams to address the inspection findings in the short, medium and longer term. The Tactical Team will support the Operational Team (essentially the school staff team) to plan, lead and embed the changes required based on current best practice. The tactical lead of each workstream is working closely with an identified member of the Northfield Academy school leadership team and some Tactical Leads are already engaging with the Operational Team. This will be extended further following the publication of the inspection report.

**Tactical Team 1: Safeguarding:** Mark Jones (Quality improvement Manager)

**Tactical Team 2: Leadership of Change:** Mike Paul (HT Bucksburn Academy)

**Tactical Team 3: Learning, teaching and assessment:** Alison Murison (HT Aberdeen Grammar School)

**Tactical Team 4: Wellbeing: partnerships and personalised support;** Craig McDermott (HT ASN and Outreach)

**Tactical Team 5: Curriculum:** Ross Allan (DHT AGS) and BGE Shona Milne (Chief Education Officer)

**Tactical Team 6: Raising attainment and achievement:** BGE Shona Milne (Chief Education Officer) and senior phase Stuart Craig (Quality Improvement Officer)

- 3.20 Tactical Leads are coordinating sources of support including that available from Education Scotland and other partners. This is to ensure that messaging is consistent and that changes put in place are co-ordinated across each interconnected workstream. This is critical as each workstream (and quality indicator) are interdependent and a change in one area will impact on other workstreams. This will also enable the Operational team to lead the change in a cohesive and coordinated way to improve the outcomes of young people.
- 3.21 As well as helping coordinate and deliver against the recommendations, the Tactical Team is asked to:
- build the capacity of all through a coaching and mentoring approach with a strong focus on collegiate leadership
  - drive changes based on robust self-evaluation to identify key priorities which are measurable. This will allow teams to check the progress of work and critically, the impact on young people
  - help establish a culture of collaboration with young people, staff, parent/carer and community so that all stakeholders have a genuine voice
  - support the development of practices in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), clear understanding of pupil and family wellbeing and of the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) Standards
- 3.22 The Tactical Leads are currently meeting on a weekly basis in order to ensure that the activity of the various workstreams is complementary and to evaluate the impact of this supporting approach. This group will focus on improvement against the core Quality Indicators and will continue to oversee the operational work taking place at school level to ensure that changes are made, monitored and embedded. The progress of this group will be shared with local Trade Union representatives regularly.
- 3.23 From late January, The HT (ASN and Outreach) has been supporting Northfield Academy for 50% of each week to help coordinate supports around pupil wellbeing. In recognition that an inspection report can be challenging for young people and staff, a Central Officer has been on-site since the inspection in January.
- 3.24 Officers continue to cover vacancies in the school wherever possible with weekly allocations of time identified for all secondary qualified staff. In addition to usual school cover by class teachers, middle and senior leaders, during the week beginning 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 104 classes were covered by supply teachers and 14 by Central Officers who are registered with GTCS as secondary teachers.
- 3.25 The impact of the support from the Tactical Leads on their own school is being carefully monitored to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on other schools across the city.

### The inspection findings

3.26 The Inspection [report](#) and more detailed [summarised inspection findings](#) were published on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The report confirms that the school has a considerable improvement journey ahead. The inspection team has shared the following strengths in the school's work.

- The individual members of staff who are making a positive difference to the experiences of young people.
- The work with partners, which is supporting young people and offering valuable social, workplace and educational opportunities. This is enabling a few young people to have very positive experiences in preparing for life and work.

3.27 The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and representative from Aberdeen City Council.

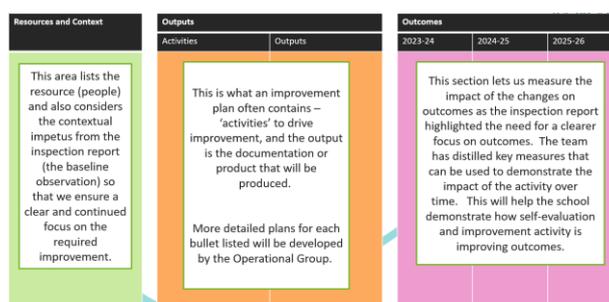
- Senior and middle leaders should work to improve the strategic leadership of all areas of the school. Review and update the school's vision and values. There should be a clear and shared understanding of the expectations, direction and identity of Northfield Academy. Ensure plans for improvement are agreed with young people, teachers and parents.
- Develop a calm, safe and purposeful learning environment. Build positive relationships and work towards a caring ethos across the school. Young people should be central to discussions about behaviour expectations and feeling safe in school.
- Agree with staff a shared understanding of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment. Develop effective processes to plan, track and monitor young people's progress.
- Ensure the wellbeing needs of all young people are a key part of all school activities. Clarify procedures relating to pupil attendance and time keeping.
- Urgently improve attainment from S1 to S6. Review the number of young people who leave school in S4 and S5, and those who do not go to a positive destination. Make plans to support broader achievements for all young people. The school should demonstrate how young people on reduced timetables are included, educated and safe.

<b>Quality indicator from How Good is our School</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Leadership of change</b>	<b>unsatisfactory</b>
<b>Learning, teaching and assessment</b>	<b>unsatisfactory</b>

<b>Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion</b>	<b>unsatisfactory</b>
<b>Raising attainment and achievement</b>	<b>unsatisfactory</b>

Responding to the written report

- 3.28 The publication of the report has triggered a rapid review of the High Level Tactical Plan being driven by the Tactical team to ensure that it fully reflects the written inspection findings. The High Level Tactical Plan is available in Appendix A and is presented as a LOGIC Model. It is proposed that Committee members be updated on progress towards delivery of the Plan every two Committee cycles through the regular inspection reporting process.
- 3.29 Considerable thought was given to the format of the Plan as the scale of change required could result in lots of activity but little evidence of impact. Using a LOGIC model allows the opportunity to record a hypothesis on the outcome that will result from a chain of events. The rationale for taking this approach is linked to Inspectors identifying that all staff now require to use data to inform decision making and maintain a relentless focus on outcomes. This simple model will help ensure the most effective use of time in the short, medium and longer term and may be rolled out to all schools to support school improvement planning after a period of testing. The full Tactical Team Plan (or LOGIC model) is available in Appendix A.
- 3.30 The key messages from the Inspection findings have been distilled and are included in the resources and context column of the LOGIC model. It is really important that the Operational and Tactical Team remain focussed on the 'baseline' captured by Inspectors and use this to drive improvement. This column also lists the resource (or person) responsible, this inclusion will help develop more robust accountability structures.



- 3.31 The key high level activities and outputs are detailed in the output column. This column will help guide the Operational Team to address the inspection recommendations as shown in one of the workstream plans below.

Resources and Context	Outputs		Outcomes - Impact		
	Activities	Outputs	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
<p><b>Curriculum Group (CI 2.2)</b></p> <p><b>Human Resources</b> School Level: Liane Gray LA Leads: Miles Jones, Shona Miles, Robi Khan <i>(Content from S1)</i> The school does not have a curriculum officer. The curriculum offered from S1 to S6 is not suitably challenging nor appropriate for young people. Learners are not well supported in making choices at transition stages. Too many young people do not see the value or purpose of their learning and they opt out of learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the triangulated data and further pupil voice to create a curriculum rationale for Northfield Academy.</li> <li>Create an SS6 timetable that includes a greater number of pathways by taking each faculty to consider offering at least one 10% per faculty.</li> <li>Increase efficiency, quality and choice through a conscious engagement with neighbouring school with regular transport provision.</li> <li>Young people will have increased opportunities for growth-sector aligned pathways through ABE Campus courses.</li> <li>Introduce choice for S3 that allows young people to make progress in their learning and oversee national qualifications.</li> <li>Introduce a greater range of partner-delivered channels to extend pathways for S4 young people.</li> <li>Final delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships in Northfield Academy by Aberdeen City Council PA programme.</li> <li>A redesign of the S1 experience will be introduced to support transition through a 'core' model focusing on health and wellbeing.</li> <li>The S1 curriculum will include a class teacher and 'home' room to allow delivery to focus on laying the foundations for learning, teaching and life opportunities.</li> <li>Rational a team of class teachers with primary experience to deliver the experience to S1 young people to enhance transition and complement the HSE.</li> <li>Create an S1 residential experience to commence learning at Northfield Academy.</li> <li>SS2 primary data will be used proactively to support the transition of young people into S1.</li> <li>Explore how the S1 experience could be developed into S2 at 2024/25, and how learning could become based on expectations, interdisciplinary learning.</li> </ul>	<p>Northfield Academy can demonstrate that curriculum development is informed by pupil voice and career aspirations data.</p> <p>An SS6 curriculum is in place that meets the needs of all young people.</p> <p>Young people are offered a broader range of courses across BGE and Senior Phase.</p> <p>A new S1 curriculum and strategy will be in place for 2023/24 including the offer of a residential experience for every S1 young person.</p> <p>An outcomes report from the new S1 design will inform changes to S2.</p>	<p>Stay on rates for S4 and S5 will begin to close the gap on the virtual comparator to 74%.</p> <p>The percentage of leavers achieving one or more LE and one or more LD courses will close the gap on the virtual comparator to 68% (S0) &amp; 28% (S6).</p> <p>The percentage of young people achieving S1 GCSE level or better by end of S3 is reading will rise to 72% beginning to close the gap on the local authority average (64% in 2021/22).</p>	<p>Stay on rates for S4 and S5 will close the gap on the virtual comparator to 79%.</p> <p>The percentage of leavers achieving one or more LE and one or more LD courses will close the gap on the virtual comparator to 72% (S0) &amp; 34% (S6).</p> <p>The percentage of young people achieving S1 GCSE level or better by end of S3 is reading will rise to 76% closing the gap further on the local authority average (64% in 2021/22).</p>	<p>Stay on rates for S4 and S5 will exceed the virtual comparator – approximately 80%. (More young people stay on at Northfield Academy in SS6).</p> <p>The percentage of leavers achieving one or more LE and one or more LD courses will exceed the virtual comparator at 78.5% (S0) and 32% (S6).</p> <p>Young people will/should attain a greater range of courses.</p> <p>The percentage of young people achieving S1 GCSE level or better by end of S3 is reading will be in line with the local authority average (64% in 2021/22). (Reading levels have improved for young people at Northfield Academy).</p>

3.32 High level outcomes (and measures) linked to the inspection findings have been established for the short, medium and longer term. This will help provide a clear indication of progress and enable plans to be responsive and agile as the hypothesis is implemented and tested. The outcomes section includes impact measures. Taking this approach will support a consistent focus on outcomes.

3.33 Given the scale of change required, a target outcome has been detailed for each of the following 3 years. Taking this approach acknowledges the scale of the improvement required and allows the Tactical team to amend approaches in the medium and longer term. This will also allow the plan to narrow in scope as improvements are realised and become areas to maintain.

3.34 Some Operational teams are already established, the publication of the Inspection findings will allow more Operational Groups to establish their operational plans linked to the High Level Tactical Plan.

3.35 Work has progressed at pace with the following areas already progressed against the recommendations.

Recommendation	Actions taken to date
<p>1. Senior and Middle leaders Improve the strategic leadership of all areas of the school. Review and update the school's vision and values. There should be a clear and shared understanding of the expectations, direction and identity of Northfield Academy. Ensure plans for improvement are agreed with young</p>	<p>Tactical Team is well established and have a clear Tactical Plan (LOGIC Model) in place that is linked to the recommendations and will ensure a consistent focus on outcomes and a proposed approach to address the inspection recommendations. Weekly meetings will continue to be held over the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>A Leadership of Change Operational Team is in place. Work is on-going to support more collegiate practices with a regular Trade Union/Management Group established.</p> <p>A Curriculum Operational Team is in place and significant work has been undertaken given the need to make changes before the change of timetable (further detail in recommendation 3).</p> <p>A Plan is in place to establish a school vision and values following the publication of the Inspection Report. An initial event on the 29<sup>th</sup> March will provide all stakeholders with an opportunity to start shaping the direction of Northfield Academy and will start to inform the direction of Operational Plans.</p>

<p>people, teachers and parents.</p>	<p>In response to feedback from young people, an event was held in February to celebrate the achievements of students in the Expressive Arts Faculty in collaboration with Aberdeen Art Gallery and the Aberdeen City Creative Learning Team. The school valued the attendance of Elected Members at this event. This signals the start of an 18 month programme called 'This is Northfield'. The school is currently recruiting 4 Artists in Residence to help young people use the arts to share and celebrate their uniqueness in order to help shift the narrative about their school and community. Each residency will have a slightly different focus:</p> <p><b>Residency 1 - What's Your Treasure?</b> invites Northfield pupils to offer new perspectives on artworks and objects in the city's art gallery and museum collection and work towards an exhibition at Aberdeen Treasure Hub to coincide with an open day in June. This residency will see young people benefit from a range of creative activities to explore what a collection is, why museums exist, what we consider a 'treasure' and why local stories and histories are important.</p> <p><b>Residency 2 - Princes Trust Collaboration.</b> Working alongside the Northfield Academy Princes Trust Achieve Programme lead, the artist will develop and deliver a project to support the use of the arts to help young people achieve by building on the positive work already undertaken in the school.</p> <p><b>Residency 3 - Supporting Health and Wellbeing.</b> Working across the whole school, this residency will explore creative interventions to improve health and wellbeing for staff, support staff and learners within the school community. Engaging with the theme "This is Northfield" to create a positive image of the school and celebrate its community.</p> <p><b>Residency 4 - Resilient Northfield.</b> The aim of this residency is to engage and consult with pupils, staff, and the wider school community to identify challenges and develop a strategy to create a positive narrative around the wider Northfield community by continuing the theme of 'This is Northfield' to celebrate the community.</p> <p>This project will be critical in helping us respond positively to the young people's feelings of being judged by postcode and the school are exceptionally grateful to our partners in the Creative Learning Team and Aberdeen Art Gallery for their support in moving this area forward at pace. Initial discussions have also been had with the city centre business improvement district, Aberdeen Inspired, to explore opportunities to build engagement between the school to develop Nuart inspired activities into the planned programme over the coming weeks. It is hoped that the local media will support the school in celebrating the achievements of the young people given that young people also shared their concerns around how they are perceived with the Inspection team.</p> <p>Appointment of 2 new senior leaders to add capacity and capability.</p>
<p>2. Develop a calm, safe and purposeful learning environment. Build positive relationships across the school. Young people</p>	<p>Agreement with Trade Unions and staff on the roles and responsibilities of all to create a safe and purposeful environment.</p> <p>Data on attendance in class is now analysed on a weekly basis and action taken to address findings. This is helping ensure a data informed approach.</p> <p>The timetable has been reviewed. A more efficient timetable structure has been put in place to decrease cover pressures and reduce the need for</p>

<p>should be central to discussions about behaviour expectations and feeling safe in school.</p>	<p>supply and management cover. This will help free up capacity to support young people and staff.</p> <p>Provisional arrangements have been made to develop a very different model for S1 pupils from August 2023. This will see young people benefiting from contact with less staff initially and be overseen by a highly skilled primary school leader who we anticipate being in post from April 2023. It is thought that this approach will help support students to settle more quickly in Northfield Academy and help address some of the issues that can present at transition points.</p> <p>Professional learning on understanding behaviour has been delivered and a member of staff is in the early stages of reviewing the PSE programme.</p> <p>Follow up discussions have been held with all young people (and their parents and carers) who identified as feeling unsafe. Emerging themes are being built into plans.</p>
<p>3. Agree with staff a shared understanding of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment. Develop effective processes to plan, track and monitor young people's progress.</p>	<p>A crucial step before continuing to build a shared understanding of the features of high-quality learning and teaching is to ensure young people have a range of relevant curricular pathways matched to their prior attainment and interests. An immediate review of the existing curriculum has taken place and the course choice process has been amended. To increase the school's capacity to deliver a wide range of SCQF courses in the Senior Phase and deliver the new S1 curriculum, support from other secondary schools through ABZ Campus will be provided.</p> <p>An amended approach to the delivery of the S1 curriculum is in development and will be further developed by working in collaboration with P7 pupils transitioning to the school in August 2023. This change will see pupils working with fewer teachers in a day, reduce their movement through school and support greater curriculum cohesion through the use of Interdisciplinary project based learning. This approach will not limit access to subject specialists as they will have a key role in the delivery of project based learning.</p> <p>The Tactical Team for Learning, Teaching and Assessment has a plan in place to consult with teaching staff during the May 2023 in service day on the first pillar of a new Learning and Teaching Framework. The plan involves teachers and young people reviewing the physical learning environment in line with practice detailed within the CIRCLE Framework.</p>
<p>4. Ensure the wellbeing needs of all young people are a key part of all school activities. Clarify procedures relating to pupil attendance and time keeping.</p>	<p>The HT (ASN and Outreach) supports Northfield Academy 50% of the time with backfill arrangements in place to support the ASN and Outreach Service. This has allowed the HT (ASN and Outreach) to work alongside Senior Leaders to develop an action plan, which seeks to address the multiple, interconnected areas for improvement relating to wellbeing, as identified across the Inspection Findings. These span six themes, which will aid the coordination of improvement activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bullying and Equalities</li> <li>▪ Included, Engaged, Involved</li> <li>▪ Partnerships</li> <li>▪ Personalised Support</li> <li>▪ Transitions</li> <li>▪ Wellbeing Strategy</li> </ul>

	<p>A draft <i>Wellbeing Strategy</i> is in place, which aligns the school's approaches to Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion to the SHANARRI (wellbeing) indicators and the articles of the UNCRC. This will ensure all aspects of the school's work is directed towards monitoring and improving wellbeing outcomes for young people. This is a live document which will continue to be shaped and developed as use of data develops.</p> <p>Work surrounding the refresh of attendance recording and monitoring procedures has begun. Complementary work around the clarification of associated Roles and Responsibilities is also being progressed. Both seek to ensure attendance management procedures are rooted in the proactive use of live data by key members of staff.</p> <p>Work to capture the voice of young people, in relation to their wellbeing, was prioritised as a matter of urgency immediately following the inspection; this was led using information provided to Inspectors via learner questionnaires. This has resulted in increased, proactive visibility of staff across the school – at period change, break and lunch in particular – and has informed the Logic Model plans.</p> <p>The school is engaging in the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Scheme, which is complementary to the work planned around the refresh of the approaches to supporting and managing bullying and equalities. Four staff have newly undergone the initial implementation training. A leadership and development plan is in place, which will see learners subsuming leadership of this area of the school's work from August 2023. In addition, plans are in development to train all staff in trauma-informed, de-escalation methodology. This will inform a planned refresh of the school's Positive Relationships policy to engender coherence in this aspect of the wellbeing strategy.</p> <p>Support has been provided to make better use of the school Management Information System to collect and collate data to enable routine data analysis to inform planning.</p> <p>A study visit is planned to Doncaster in March to visit XP (a school with a very similar Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) profile who structure the day very differently in order to support positive wellbeing and community). This study visit will see a number of stakeholders from the Northfield community determine if establishing 'crews' will help support the young people to have a stronger sense of community and better support the wellbeing of young people in the longer term.</p>
<p>5. Urgently improve attainment from S1 to S6. Review the number of young people who leave school in S4 and S5, and those who do not go to a positive destination. Make plans to support broader achievements for</p>	<p>The profile and achievements of young people in the senior phase have been reviewed to determine supports available from other schools to help secure positive attainment outcomes.</p> <p>For the remainder of this current session 2022-23; the latest round of attainment reviews have been completed with all faculty areas, focusing on interventions for all including those at most risk, faculties will continue to offer a range of lunchtime and after school sessions to support young people in their preparations for assessment, and a set of options for study during the spring break are at the latter stages of preparation.</p> <p>For 2023-24 and beyond, the staff team have used a range of data sources to plan together in preparation for a revised Senior Phase model; working in</p>

<p>all young people. The school should demonstrate how young people on reduced timetables are included, educated and safe.</p>	<p>partnership with neighbouring schools to extend and enhance the quality of offer, and broadening pathway options from within the school and through partnerships. Support and advice has been sought from Education Scotland (Support Arm) on curriculum change. This should help realise an increase in staying on rates.</p> <p>Plans for individual learners are under review.</p> <p>All young people who expressed concerns around safety have been interviewed and the feedback has been used to review the focus of supervision at lunchtime and in communal areas at change of class.</p> <p>Plans are in place to review formal attendance, exclusions and bullying procedures with time currently being invested in monitoring the data to ensure that decisions taken are based on sound evidence. This work will enable more consistent reporting and help identify more reliable trends.</p>
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3.36 Officers anticipate that HMIE will return to Northfield Academy to check progress against the recommendations within 6 months of publication of the report. This visit is classed as an 'interim' visit and will provide the school with an opportunity to share early progress against the recommendations and share their plans for the months and years ahead. It is anticipated that Inspectors will return again after a further 18 months. Inspectors will continue to engage with the school until all recommendations have been fully addressed. In the meantime, support is available from the support arm of Education Scotland and being coordinated through the Tactical Leads.

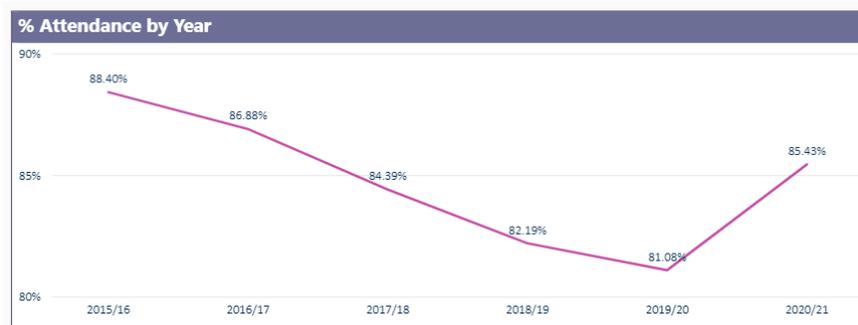
**3.37 Securing improvement in the longer term**

We require to secure immediate improvements for the cohort of children within the school through a focus on the core Quality Indicators to realise sustained change.

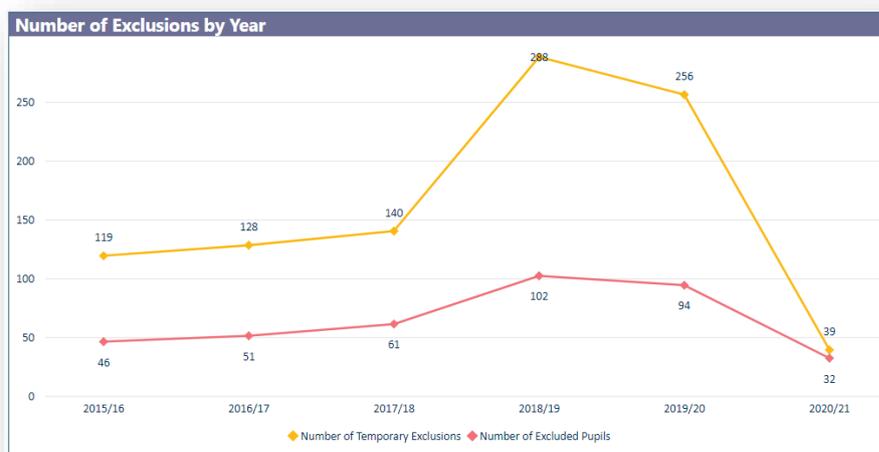
3.38 A review of historical data shows that Northfield Academy has been under-performing for a significant period of time and this knowledge triggered the interventions outlined from paragraph 3.1 in this report. Education Scotland reviewed the data available to them from 2016 and concluded that the school had been consistently underperforming from 2016 to the present day. Local data would suggest that the issues in the school extend beyond 2016 and this would suggest that the school has not incrementally implemented changes to the curriculum over a long period of time resulting in the need for considerable change (rather than incremental) now.

3.39 Attendance at Northfield Academy sits considerably below the city averages. Validated attendance in 2020/21 sat at 85% which was 8% lower than the city average of 93% at that time. By comparison, St Machar Academy (as the schools nearest comparator based on deprivation) sits far higher at over 91%. Attendance rates are currently higher than recorded previously but Inspectors rightly identify that attendance levels are not where they should be. This suggests that the broad general education has not been laying the foundations for success in the senior phase and that the pathways available

to young people are not well matched to local context or the aspirations of young people.

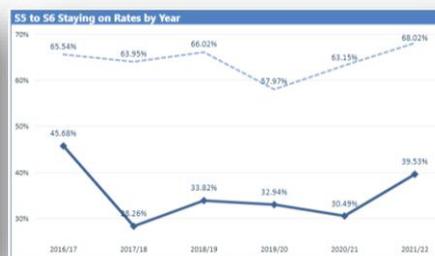
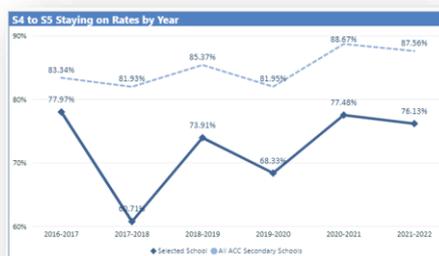


3.40 The number of half days lost to exclusion at Northfield has reduced of late, but has historically been significantly above both local and national averages.



3.41 There is clear evidence that the number of children being entered for and passing National 5 assessments is low. Attainment levels are significantly below comparator schools.

3.42 Staying on rates are very low and significantly below the city and national average. This illustrates that the curriculum does not ideally meet the needs of young people and that there aren't options available to attract them to remain in school.



- 3.43 There may be a need to consider changing how the school and other partners work to support children and families in order to turn around these long rooted and systemic issues. We know that young people are heavily influenced by a range of societal issues and that the wellbeing of young people relies on support from a wide range of partners. Making one single change (such as simply working to address the core Quality Indicators) is less likely to secure positive outcomes for young people and their families than taking a more holistic whole family approach.
- 3.44 As work is now well underway under the leadership of the Tactical Team we propose to establish an expert **Strategic Advisory Group** to oversee the consideration of structural changes to the delivery of services. It is proposed that this group include a range of individuals with a nationally recognised expertise in their sectoral, professional and topic fields across education (primary, secondary and tertiary), children's social work, and the contextual factors affecting the population health of this community. The Advisory Group will include the Chair of the Parent Council and pupil representation.
- 3.45 The Advisory Group would have a key role in advising the Council on the development and implementation of more radical changes that may be required to address the societal factors and the circumstances of individual families. We need to consider fully the needs of young people and families and may need to change the paradigm to better reflect the needs of the young people and families served by the school. The draft governance framework is available in Appendix B.
- 3.46 Taking this approach will enable us to consider the wider education and policy reforms and consider the need for more extensive reform in how services are delivered to serve the Northfield Community. It is proposed that a report be presented to Committee as the first full HMle follow up visit is published to help Committee determine if we continue to focus exclusively on the core quality indicators or implement further change.

#### **Reflections on our central approaches to quality improvement**

- 3.47 The central team continue to review quality assurance and improvement arrangements. There is clear evidence that external inspections of the authority's schools, undertaken since implementation of the Council Target Operating Model and forming of the new education structure, are more positive than those held before where a return inspection had become highly likely. However, there are still issues to address as evidenced by this inspection.
- 3.48 Pre-pandemic difficulties recruiting class teachers and senior and middle leaders has resulted in many leaders being appointed with limited experience of inspection and inspection expectations, there is a need to ensure the use of the Aberdeen City Standards, available to all school leaders, are more clearly evidenced.
- 3.49 The restrictions on the central team's ability to move between schools during the periods of lockdown to undertake assurance checks impacted progress as

does the on-going commitment to cover vacancies where required to keep schools operational.

- 3.50 Inspection outcomes show that primary schools are currently realising greater improvement from pre-pandemic evaluations than secondary schools, this is partially due to the increased complexity at secondary schools. The Northfield Academy inspection finding has triggered a review of Quality Improvement arrangements in secondary schools and will result in an enhancement to current quality improvement and assurance approaches to make increased use of peer review and challenge.
- 3.51 In addition, Head Teachers have identified a need to build capacity in Middle and Senior Leaders to help exemplify the standards expected and a programme of professional learning is currently being developed. This leadership development programme will help ensure secondary school leaders are aware of expectations and have suitable accountability structures in place to ensure delivery against them.
- 3.52 As central staffing reduces, there is a need to think carefully about how to ensure a rigorous approach to quality improvement with fewer staff. Aberdeen City benefits from a number of very talented Head Teachers and has sought their support in undertaking more detailed evaluations of some schools such as the quality improvement visit described at para 3.4. It is proposed that this approach be embedded proportionately into our quality improvement framework by building capacity in DHTs and involving HTs and DHTs in the peer review process across the core Quality Indicators.
- 3.53 Significant work has been undertaken to improve the accuracy of self-evaluation gradings against the core quality indicators and many schools are now driving improvement successfully at school level. Improvements in the accuracy of self-evaluation gradings now affords the central team the opportunity to prioritise schools requiring more significant improvement.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Implementation of the recommendations will assist the Council discharge its statutory duties under the Education legislation more effectively.

#### **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 No negative environmental impacts have been identified.

## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Risk of not improving outcomes for learners at Northfield.	Detailed plan in place to address the findings of the inspection.	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk of not complying with national guidance	Detailed plan in place to address the findings of the inspection with on-going support from across our secondary schools and beyond.	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	Risk that improvement work does not lead to improved outcomes for learners	Weekly Tactical meetings to look at the impact of changes on young people.	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	No risks identified			
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk that poor quality of provision will present a reputational risk to the Council	Weekly meetings of the Tactical Team will help address any issues timeously.	M	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No risks identified			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u></b>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p>Commit to realising the potential of each individual, by seeking to widen curriculum choice and</p>	<p>External scrutiny can support wider reform when issues are entrenched. It is thought that the external</p>

<p>implement progressive choices.</p> <p>Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city.</p>	<p>report will serve as a catalyst for change at Northfield Academy.</p>
<p><b><u><a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</a></u></b></p>	
<p>Prosperous People - 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026</p>	<p>Engagement with inspectors provides an opportunity to learn from national best practice and has helped establish the Tactical Team to support the school's improvement journey. The establishment of the Expert Advisory group will help ensure that the provision of services from Northfield better serves the community.</p>
<p><b>Regional and City Strategies</b></p> <p>Prevention Strategy</p> <p>Children's Services Plan</p> <p>National Improvement Framework Plan</p>	<p>Engagement with the Inspectorate is fully aligned to the city prevention strategy. Work to address poverty and improvement in the Children's services plan, the Child Poverty Action Plan and the National Improvement Framework Plan is also supported through external scrutiny.</p>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Other</b>	None

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

## 11. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Tactical Team Plan  
Appendix B – Governance Framework

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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