

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 24 JUNE 2026

REPORT ON: INSPECTION OF ST PAUL'S RC ACADEMY

REPORT BY: INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 152-2026

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Children and Families Committee of the findings of the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspection of St Paul's RC Academy in December 2025.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny and Audit Committee notes:
- a. the findings and key messages of the external inspection; and
 - b. the arrangements in place to monitor progress towards meeting the areas for improvement identified in the report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the agreement of this report.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings are subject to external scrutiny. Secondary schools are inspected by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education using national inspection frameworks. Inspection reports set out strengths, areas for improvement and an evaluation of the school's capacity to improve.
- 4.2 St Paul's RC Academy was inspected by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education in December 2025. A full model inspection was undertaken, evaluating four quality indicators from *How Good Is Our School? (Fourth Edition)*:
- Leadership of change
 - Learning, teaching and assessment
 - Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion
 - Raising attainment and achievement
- 4.3 Safeguarding was considered as part of the inspection. A Health and Nutrition Inspector also contributed to the inspection as part of national sampling arrangements.
- 4.3 HMIE published the inspection report on 31 March 2026.
- 4.4 St Paul's RC Academy is a denominational secondary school located in the City of Dundee. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 1059 young people.
- 4.5 The school's current Head Teacher has been in post for three years and is supported by three Deputy Head Teachers.
- 4.6 Approximately 53% of pupils live in SIMD deciles 1 and 2. Around 53% of pupils require additional support for learning. Approximately 33% are registered for free school meals. The school's Pupil Equity Fund allocation is £232,750.

5.0 KEY INSPECTION FINDINGS

5.1 Inspectors identified the following key strengths in the school's work (with further detail provided in Appendix 1):

- The Head Teacher provides clear and effective leadership with a strong focus on relationships and wellbeing
- Young people are respectful, motivated and demonstrate a strong sense of belonging
- Learning and teaching is supported through consistent whole-school approaches
- Staff work effectively to address barriers to learning and support pupils' progress
- Almost all young people achieve literacy and numeracy qualifications by the time they leave school

5.2 Inspectors identified the following areas for improvement:

- Senior and middle leaders should strengthen approaches to evaluating improvement activity and ensure a clearer focus on improving outcomes
- Teachers should continue to develop learning and teaching approaches to ensure they are consistently engaging, creative and effective
- A clear whole-school strategy should be developed to raise attainment and strengthen the curriculum
- Further work is required to improve attendance by addressing barriers experienced by young people

6.0 INSPECTION EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

6.1 HMIE evaluated the school against the four quality indicators outlined in paragraph 4.2 using the national six-point scale.

6.2 The evaluations for St Paul's RC Academy are as follows:

- Leadership of change – Satisfactory
- Learning, teaching and assessment – Good
- Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion – Good
- Raising attainment and achievement – Satisfactory

6.3 HM Inspectors confirmed that they are confident in the school's capacity to continue to improve and, as a result, no further inspection visits will be undertaken in connection with this inspection.

6.4 Full details of the inspection findings, including the inspection report and detailed evidence across each quality indicator, are provided in the appendices.

6.5 St Paul's RC Academy is incorporating the identified areas for improvement within its School Improvement Plan (2026/27 and beyond). Progress will be monitored through the school's quality improvement processes and reporting arrangements.

6.6 The school will continue to be supported and challenged through the Education service's School Improvement Framework. This includes:

- regular engagement with the link Quality Improvement Officer to review progress against inspection findings
- ongoing self-evaluation and improvement activity aligned to school and departmental improvement plans
- participation in Every Dundee Learner Matters collaborative improvement strategy, including engagement in School Improvement Partnerships
- ongoing monitoring of progress through established service-level quality assurance and improvement arrangements

6.7 Progress will be reported through the school's Standards and Quality Report and through ongoing engagement with the local authority.

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The Council Leadership Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

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Chief Social Work Officer

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Chief Education Officer

MAY 2026

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APPENDIX 1

Dundee City Council

Children and Families Service

Scrutiny and Audit Committee Report Summary Notes

Inspection and Reporting

Inspection Agencies	HMIE
Report Publication Date	31 st March 2026
Name of Establishment	St Paul's RC Academy
Sector	Secondary
Name of Head Teacher	Mrs Kirsty Small
Roll	1059

Inspection Outcomes 2026

Quality Indicator	St Paul's RC Academy
1.3 Leadership of change	Satisfactory
2.3 Learning, teaching, and assessment	Good
3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality & inclusion	Good
3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	Satisfactory

The reports use the following word scale:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Inspection Outcomes December 2025

Key Strengths for School
• The headteacher who leads the school well. She has a clear focus on positive relationships and wellbeing across the whole school community. She has worked with all staff and young people to create a positive, calm and nurturing environment for learning, firmly based on the school's Gospel values. • Young people who are respectful, well-mannered and proud to be pupils at St Paul's. They appreciate the high levels of encouragement and support that they receive to do their very best. They have a strong sense of belonging in the school. • Teachers provide a strong foundation for high quality learning through the implementation of the "St Paul's RC Academy Standards for Learning, teaching and assessment". As a result, young people experience lessons which are well structured and consistent. • Senior leaders and staff who work together well to ensure they address barriers to learning. Young people are well supported to access their learning and experiences. As a result, almost all young people achieve qualifications in literacy and numeracy, by the time they leave school.

Areas for Improvement for School
• Senior and middle leaders should continue to work with staff to improve approaches to evaluating the improvement work of the school. This will help to foster a more ambitious and aspirational culture for young people. All staff should have a clearer understanding of how they can contribute to improving outcomes for young people. • Teachers should continue to develop approaches to planning and delivering creative, innovative and engaging learning experiences. They should maximise the use of digital resources within lessons to inspire and motivate young people. • Senior leaders should develop a whole-school strategy for raising attainment in partnership with all staff, parents, young people and partners. They should also progress with their work in developing a refreshed curriculum. • Senior leaders and staff should continue to work with the school community to remove barriers to young people's attendance at school.

Synopsis – Summary of Inspection Findings

Following publication of the inspection reports (see Appendix 3) and the Summarised Inspection Findings for St Paul's RC Academy (see link below), the school's next Improvement Plan 2026/27 will reflect the areas for improvement identified by HMIE and Care Inspectorate and provide a clear strategic focus for related school improvement.

The following strengths and areas for improvement were highlighted within each of the quality indicators.

St Paul's RC Academy

QI 1.3 - Leadership of change
Strengths • Strong, compassionate leadership: The headteacher is highly respected and provides caring, effective leadership with a clear focus on wellbeing for young people and staff. • Clear vision and values: The school vision and FAIR values (fairness, ambition, inclusion and respect), rooted in Gospel values, are well embedded, consistently modelled, and positively influence behaviour and engagement. • Collaborative improvement planning: Senior and middle leaders work together effectively through aligned School Improvement Plans (SIP) and Departmental Improvement Plans (DIP), supporting coherence across the school. • Effective use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF): PEF is well planned and targeted to reduce barriers to learning, particularly for young people facing socio-economic disadvantage, with demonstrable positive impact. • Culture of self-evaluation and collaboration: Staff engage well in professional dialogue, teacher enquiry, and collaborative self-evaluation, including sharing effective practice with other schools.

- **Strong professional learning:** Whole-school professional development, including trauma-informed and nurture-based practice, is well chosen and enhances young people's experiences.
- **Growing leadership opportunities:** Senior pupils increasingly take on leadership roles in assemblies, clubs, departments, and pastoral groups, contributing positively to school life.
- **Positive partnerships:** Constructive partnership working with Skills Development Scotland supports career guidance and planning for learners.

Areas for Development

- **Improve departmental planning quality:** Senior leaders should provide clearer guidance and greater challenge to ensure self-evaluation process and DIPs contain strategic, measurable priorities, particularly around attainment.
- **Improve timing of professional review:** Professional review and development discussions should be more closely aligned with the school improvement cycle to maximise impact.
- **Increase young people's voice and leadership opportunities:** Pupil council work should be more visible, systematic, and inclusive, ensuring all young people feel their views are heard and valued. Opportunities for leadership should be extended across all stages and areas of school improvement.
- **Strengthen curriculum and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) coherence:** A fully coherent curriculum strategy is needed to consistently embed DYW priorities, improve progression pathways, and raise attainment across all stages.

QI 2.3 - Learning, teaching and assessment

Strengths

- **Positive relationships and climate for learning:** Warm, caring and nurturing relationships are evident across the school, underpinned by well-embedded FAIR values that promote readiness to learn.
- **Consistent classroom routines:** Agreed approaches such as staff greeting learners and effective starter activities support engagement and calm learning environments.
- **Shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching:** The *St Paul's RC Academy Way* and *Standards for Learning, Teaching and Assessment* support increasingly consistent classroom practice.
- **Strong learner engagement:** Almost all young people are focused, motivated and behave well in lessons, with low-level disruption handled sensitively and effectively.
- **Clear lesson structure:** Teachers plan well-resourced, purposeful lessons with clear explanations and questioning to check understanding.
- **Developing effective questioning and digital practice:** In some classes, highly effective questioning promotes higher-order thinking and creative use of digital technology enhances learning.
- **Support for learners' needs:** Teachers know learners well and provide appropriate adaptations, supported very effectively by support for learning staff.
- **Strong assessment and moderation practice:** Robust approaches to assessment, moderation and verification, particularly in the senior phase, support accurate professional judgement.
- **Effective senior-phase support:** Young people understand expectations and progress towards SQA targets; teaching teams work collaboratively to plan learning.
- **Improving digital access to learning:** Online platforms are used increasingly well to share resources and support learning beyond the classroom.

Areas for Development

- **Increase consistency in classroom practice:** to ensure planning meets the needs of highest-attaining learners as well as those requiring additional support.
- **Develop digital learning further:** Embed real-world contexts and the meta-skills framework and share effective digital practice and improve connectivity and use of assistive technologies.
- **Increase learner ownership:** Provide more opportunities for learners to lead their learning, make choices, and engage in high-quality self- and peer-assessment.

QI 3.1 - Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

Strengths

- **Strong nurturing ethos:** Young people experience a positive, caring, and inclusive climate underpinned by well-embedded school values. Most feel safe, supported, and have a strong sense of belonging.
- **Supportive relationships:** Staff know young people well, respond sensitively to wellbeing concerns, and act quickly to secure appropriate support.
- **Effective wellbeing education:** A progressive PSE programme supports learners' understanding of wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, positive relationships, and personal safety.
- **Highly effective support structures:** Senior leaders, guidance, and support for learning staff work very well together through house teams to identify needs and implement timely, effective interventions.
- **Strong partnership working:** External partners such as Place2Be, mentoring services, Police Scotland and NHS partners enhance wellbeing support and learning experiences.
- **Trauma-informed and inclusive practice:** Professional learning in nurture, trauma-sensitive approaches, and inclusive practice is strengthening staff capacity to meet diverse needs.
- **Robust policies and procedures:** Clear approaches to relationships for learning, anti-bullying reporting, and additional support needs are well understood by staff.
- **Targeted support for vulnerable groups:** Care-experienced young people, young carers, and those needing enhanced or short-term support receive strong, personalised care.
- **Rights-based culture:** The school's Rights Respecting work is well embedded, nationally recognised, and contributes positively to inclusion and respect.
- **Welcoming school community:** New pupils from diverse backgrounds feel welcomed and quickly included

Areas for Development

- **Track and monitor wellbeing and attendance:** Introduce and embed an online wellbeing tracking tool to identify trends, target interventions, and measure impact more effectively.
- **Increase cultural responsiveness:** Further embed equality, inclusion, children's' rights and diversity across the curriculum through more inclusive resources, groups, and lesson content.
- **Monitor inclusive practice consistently:** Ensure inclusive classroom practice is evaluated regularly to sustain consistency across the school.

QI 3.2 - Raising attainment and achievement

Strengths

- **Strong overall literacy and numeracy outcomes:** Almost all young people leave school with qualifications in literacy and numeracy.
- **Improving numeracy attainment:** Attainment at SCQF level 5 has improved over time, with strong results in National 5 Mathematics and Applications of Mathematics, often above national averages for A–C passes.
- **Effective senior-phase assessment and moderation:** Robust verification processes and staff expertise, including SQA roles, support accurate professional judgement.
- **Positive outcomes for lower and middle attainers:** By S5 and S6, lower- and middle-attaining learners often perform in line with or above virtual comparators.
- **Strong equity work:** Effective use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) helps reduce barriers related to poverty, attendance and wellbeing, contributing to narrowed attainment gaps.
- **Positive destinations:** Almost all leavers move into positive destinations, with improving outcomes overall.
- **Wider achievement opportunities:** Young people gain additional qualifications and awards that support employability, confidence and skills development.

- **Targeted support for vulnerable learners:** ASN learners, SIMD groups, and those facing attendance challenges receive well-planned, focused support.

Areas for Development

- **Raise expectations in literacy, particularly reading:** Attainment in reading at CfE fourth level and SCQF level 6 requires urgent improvement. Increase presentation rates and attainment at N5 and Higher English, particularly at A grades.
- **Strengthen attainment tracking in S1–S3:** Develop a clearer, strategic overview of progress and attainment over time, underpinned by stronger moderation.
- **Increase challenge for high-attaining learners:** Outcomes for the highest-attaining 20% are inconsistent, particularly by S5 and S6.
- **Track wider achievement more systematically:** Develop a strategic approach to widening participation in leadership and achievement opportunities.

Key activity to date has included the following:

Leadership of Change:

- Middle Leaders are undergoing training around effective self-evaluation including analysis of data. Five Middle Leaders have already attained training around analysis of attainment. The Data Analysis Enquiry Group will take this forward to support staff and to analysis whole school data further.
- Planned and targeted support of the Pedagogy Team to review the Curriculum Rationale for the School. This will then follow on to our Presentation Policy and newly created Positive Destination Policy.
- Review of the Working Time Agreement through the Staff Consultative Committee and the Quality Assurance Calendar to plan meaningful time to support and challenge departments with Strategic Planning.
- Enquiry Groups to have direct links to the School Improvement Plan via Priorities and Actions listed. End of Session Showcase planned in Every Dundee Learner Matters (EDLM) approach during the In-Service Day.
- Leadership opportunities to be monitored for young people. Tracked and strengthened via the use of the pilot Pupil Tracing “Participating” tool. All departments to include Leadership opportunities for young people in the Department Improvement Plans for 2026/27.
- Pupils Council structure to change to include a Class Rep and a revised House Captain Structure to support this.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- Quality Assurance Calendar to revise Classroom Support Visits to included Peer observations from identified areas of development
- Co-ordinated CLPL Calendar following a meeting with the Pedagogy Team to ensure there are twilight sessions available through the year both in house and out with to meet staff development needs.
- Stakeholder consultation allocation of PEF to improve Digital Approach across the school this includes laptop and Promethium Board allocation across all departments.
- Use of data in Broad General Education (BGE), Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) and National Standardised Assessments (NSA) data to identify pupils to ensure challenge for the highest attaining 20%.

Ensuring Wellbeing, Inclusion and Equality

- Mentors in Violence Prevention Ambassadors to start work next session with S5 pupils delivering to BGE cohorts to develop a mentorship approach.
- Restructuring of Inclusion Room with regards to staffing and timetabling of supports. This will help to target specific groups at time of the week for them to feel more secure in coming in for support and improve attendance. Nurture training organised for an identified member of Staff. Inclusion Room

facilitated by Supporting Learner's Staffing. Changes based on feedback from staff and young people on current practice.

- Culture Day planned for the 17th of June. Partnerships with families to help support this event. Led by the Pupil Council and young ambassadors across year groups. Visits have been made to other schools to see examples of good practice.
- Learning and Teaching Enquiry Group to continue to look at Universal Support Strategies to help all to benefit such as the Stuck Toolkit.
- Work to continue with Dundee Educational Psychology Service (DEPS) around Relationships for Learning: Routines Pilot. This is in its early stages and planning for Sessions 2026/27 to trial.
- Continue to evaluate the school's approach to inclusive practice through use of the Dundee Standard of Inclusive Practice.
- Review of all School Policies in consultation with our young people; to be focused around the UNCRC. This will help move towards Gold Rights Respecting School in the next 3 years (in line with recommendations from achieving Silver Award this session. This has already been achieved with our Relationships for Learning Policy. This needs to be added to each Department Improvement Plan also as a priority.

Raising Attainment and Achievement

- Improvement in Literacy has begun with a sustained projected uptake in Higher English this session with four Highers classes. This has been the case for the current session also. A new Presentation Policy will consider the proposal of those returning to S5 must take the next level of Literacy that is appropriate to their abilities. The intention would be that young people would be encouraged to leave school with nothing less than a National 5 in English/Literacy.
- New partnerships being developed with the Community Campus librarian team to help encourage readership from S1 onwards. This will also include intensive work with S1 and looking to establish our school as a "Reading School". This would be encouraging readers to support young people in our Cluster Primaries. (Via SQA Work Experience Programme and Reading Ambassadors in the BGE).
- The school continues to take part in the pilot for Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) for the first Secondary school in Dundee. This will help to improve Literacy via a focus on writing.
- Highest 20% of attaining learners are being challenged with regards to course choice to maximise potential and overall attainment. Deep dive analysis of attainment data and NSA S3 data to identify targeted group. Encouragement for progression to Level 6/Higher as opposed to horizontal moving amongst National 5.
- Review of Curriculum Rationale and Presentation policies will support the improvement around progression pathways from S3 to s4 to help maximise attainment.
- Further Training on use of various attainment tools are being implemented along with making use of the new Pupil Tracking Tool and its capabilities. This will also involve regular tracking throughout year to ensure early intervention can be taking place across departments and year groups.
- Tracking of wider achievement to be implemented via a pilot of the new Pupil Tracking System and the Participation Tool. This will be used during Learning and Achievement Meetings which take place for all young people to which parents/carers are invited. This will allow us to identify gaps and opportunities of leadership in the school community.

Full details of St Paul's RC Academy Summary of Inspection Findings are available at:
[St Paul's RC Academy summarised inspection findings, Dundee City Council 31/03/26](#)

Explanation of terms of quantity

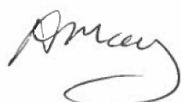
The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91-99
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Audrey May
Executive Director

Paul Fleming
Chief Education Officer

Signed



Audrey May, Executive Director of Children and Families Service
Paul Fleming, Head of Service (Chief Education Officer)

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31 March 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In December 2025, a team of HM Inspectors of Education visited St Paul's RC Academy. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

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

- The headteacher who leads the school well. She has a clear focus on positive relationships and wellbeing across the whole school community. She has worked with all staff and young people to create a positive, calm and nurturing environment for learning, firmly based on the school's Gospel values.
- Young people who are respectful, well-mannered and proud to be pupils at St Paul's. They appreciate the high levels of encouragement and support that they receive to do their very best. They have a strong sense of belonging in the school.
- Teachers provide a strong foundation for high quality learning through the implementation of the "St Paul's RC Academy Standards for Learning, teaching and assessment". As a result, young people experience lessons which are well structured and consistent.
- Senior leaders and staff who work together well to ensure they address barriers to learning. Young people are well supported to access their learning and experiences. As a result, almost all young people achieve qualifications in literacy and numeracy, by the time they leave school.

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

- Senior and middle leaders should continue to work with staff to improve approaches to evaluating the improvement work of the school. This will help to foster a more ambitious and aspirational culture for young people. All staff should have a clearer understanding of how they can contribute to improving outcomes for young people.
- Teachers should continue to develop approaches to planning and delivering creative, innovative and engaging learning experiences. They should maximize the use of digital resources within lessons to inspire and motivate young people.

- Senior leaders should develop a whole-school strategy for raising attainment in partnership with all staff, parents, young people and partners. They should also progress with their work in developing a refreshed curriculum.
- Senior leaders and staff should continue to work with the school community to remove barriers to young people's attendance at school.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using four quality indicators from [How good is our school \(4th edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish schools are doing.

Here are HMIE's evaluation of St. Pauls Academy

Quality indicators	Evaluation
Leadership of change	satisfactory
Learning, teaching and assessment	good
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	good
Raising attainment and achievement	satisfactory
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: How good is our school? (4th edition) , Appendix 3: The six-point scale	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the HMIE website at: [St Paul's RC Academy | Inspection Report | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland](#)

What happens next?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Dundee City Council will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Teri McIntosh
HM Inspector

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland