

Your Ref:

**Education Services**

Our Ref: DISTRICT\INFO\QI INDICES\ES\REPORTS\WEST\  
STRANRAER ACADEMY\LET001-CG\EB\RL

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Dear Parent / Carer

## **PROGRESS REPORT FOLLOWING HM INSPECTION OF STRANRAER ACADEMY – 6 MAY 2014**

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of Education Services, Dumfries and Galloway Council, I write with an update on progress made by Stranraer Academy following publication of its HMI report of 6 May 2014. You may recall that the report noted four recommendations and I have detailed below the key actions, under broad headings, which the school community have undertaken to address these recommendations.

### **Continue to improve the consistency of the quality of learning and teaching and to raise expectations of what young peoples can achieve.**

Throughout this session school staff have focussed on ways of improving the quality of learning and teaching and raising the expectations of pupils. Much of the work in this area has been delivered through the development of new self-evaluation procedures and the introduction of a more robust monitoring and tracking procedure for all pupils which is helping raise awareness of progress along with next steps in learning. Staff have been working together to share practice on how to give effective feedback in the class and use a variety of questioning techniques and Higher Order Thinking Skills. This work is having a positive effect on the learner's classroom experience and some good examples of practice have been noted around the school.

Improvements are noted in the standard of pupils' written work. Staff are now marking pupil work on a more frequent basis and pupils are increasingly feeling that their work is more valued with clear evidence of what their next steps in learning are. An increased focus on literacy and consistent use of a literacy code in all classrooms is supporting literacy developments across the curriculum. A numeracy policy has recently been completed and distributed across the school. Both these policies outline the importance of the responsibility for all in developing both literacy and numeracy to raise attainment and provide support for staff on how to make improvements in these areas.

During session 2014 – 15, the school has amended its curriculum to ensure that the entitlements for all young people are met. Pupils in S1 and 2 experience a broad general education through the provision of a wide range of opportunities across all curricular areas. In S3 whilst maintaining the breadth of curriculum young people have the opportunity to make choices which is allowing them to deepen and apply their learning across a range of subjects. This broad range of experience in S3 provides a strong platform for them to choose subjects which they wish to study in S4 and beyond. The senior phase curriculum (S4- 6) provides learners with clear progression routes and further opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work. Within the senior phase there are opportunities to study a wide range of subjects, from National 3 to Advanced Higher with a number of flexible pathways available to meet the needs of the young people. The range of vocational courses on offer is increasing, as is opportunities for work experience, volunteering, peer support, leadership, employability courses, local business links and the number of courses on offer at the local college.

In conjunction with the NHS, significant changes have been made to content and the delivery of the PSE programme, now known as Health & Well-being. Pupil support staff now solely deliver the progressive programme which is much more pupil led. This change is helping to ensure that every young person's entitlement to appropriate personal support and challenge is met.

Interdisciplinary learning (IDL) is now firmly established on timetable as a context for learning for all S1/S2 pupils. This is providing opportunities for skills development, depth of investigation, and meaningful engagement by pupils.

Some progress has been made regarding building better curricular links with our cluster primaries. The cluster has been working on plans for Literacy, Numeracy and HWB with considerable work having been completed across the cluster in relation to Numeracy. This work is supporting transition through more effective continuity in learning. The next step is for other curricular areas to establish links with teachers in the primary schools to sharing standards, moderation to support the development of a more robust progressive curriculum in all areas. This will allow for the needs of all learners to be more appropriately addressed. In the learning centre, a number of pupils are now working towards Caledonia Awards. For S4 – 6 pupils in the learning centre, National 1 and 2 units are individually planned, to take into consideration the strengths and targets of the pupils. A wider range of units are now available for learners to access. Work is progressing well in achieving positive destinations for all learning centre and Aird pupils.

A positive behaviour and relationships group which includes pupils has looked at current classroom expectations and reviewed them. The reviewed expectations resulted from consultation which took place with all stakeholders and reflect views shared. Pupils have been made aware of them through school assemblies and copies of the expectations are displayed around the school.

**Develop effective ways of tracking, monitoring and reporting young people's progress and achievements across the curriculum, to ensure they attain as highly as possible.**

The school has introduced a much more effective system of tracking and monitoring pupils progress and achievements across the curriculum. Good progress has been made in implementing this system in the senior school. Senior pupils now set targets with their subject teachers as part of a learning conversation where they discussed aspirational,

working and target grades. These conversations have been well received by pupils and have supported them in developing their awareness of their individual progress, responsibilities and ability to talk about their learning. The school is now working to develop the system further by ensuring the nature and purpose of these conversations is consistent and to engage the young people fully in setting their targets.

Progress has also been made regarding developing a system of monitoring and tracking progress through the Broad General Education (S1-3) linked to the significant aspects of learning. As with senior pupils, a key feature of these new procedures is teachers engaging with pupils in conversations about their learning, their responsibilities along with their next steps in learning. A reporting group, which includes parents, has been set up to look at the format of reports for this stage.

An effective system has been developed to gather and record information relating to wider involvement and achievement. This is providing a good overview of everything pupils are involved in, both within and outwith school, providing an opportunity to celebrate these achievements and target those not involved with a range of opportunities to develop their skills further. As a result of this work, a larger number of pupils are now engaged in an opportunity which is supporting the development of a broad range of skills for life and work. Increasing numbers of pupils are successfully having their skills recognised through participation in awards such as Dynamic Youth, Saltire, Youth Democracy, John Muir, Duke of Edinburgh, Sports Leaders and Columba 1400. Participation in these awards along with an increased range of volunteering and leadership opportunities is supporting the development of positive attitudes, self-confidence and leadership skills throughout the school.

In supporting pupils move towards a positive destination the school has been working with Dumfries and Galloway Employability Partnership. This involves early identification of potential school leavers who are at risk of not entering a positive destination and providing appropriate support and links to agencies who will work with them.

### **Improve the impact of self-evaluation on the quality of the curriculum and young people's learning and achievement.**

Considerable progress has been made in relation to developing effective systems and procedures to take forward and improve the impact of self- evaluation across the school and its community. Key to this progress has been the lead taken by the Headteacher and SMT in supporting, leading and working with a range of stakeholders (parents, pupils, staff and partners) to take this work forward.

A self-evaluation overview along with a calendar is now providing a more focussed approach to self-evaluation and is helping to align activities across the school. This has been shared across the school community, helping to develop everyone's understanding of the school's vision and values along with the journey towards improvement that the school is undertaking. The self-evaluation calendar includes a wide range of opportunities to engage with all stakeholders (parents, pupils, staff and partners) through for example observations including peer, professional dialogue, surveys/questionnaires, data analysis, monitoring and tracking with the information gained being used to identify strengths and development needs.

All staff have been engaged in the past year in a range of professional learning activities to support the implementation of the new qualifications and aspects of Curriculum for

Excellence BGE. This has included assessment and profiling, development of courses and programmes and engagement with the progression frameworks. This is having a positive impact on classroom delivery.

**Improve teamwork and leadership of senior managers to provide a clear sense of direction.**

During session 2014-15, following the retirement of a member of the senior management team the roles and remits of the remaining members of the team were streamlined. This has allowed for clear roles and responsibilities of each member of the senior team to be identified. Supporting this over the last session has been a number of short term leadership appointments which have provided a number of staff with valuable opportunities to take on leadership roles to lead aspects of school improvement. Their work has complimented and supported the work of the SMT, Curriculum and Pupil Support Principal Teachers. Alongside these opportunities all staff have been involved in a working groups which are taking forward aspects of development. This is improving teamwork across the school. Opportunities to increase pupil voice across the school continue to be developed. Pupils have been consulted and have commented on a number of new initiatives alongside teaching and learning. Focus groups have been held to gather views which have led to a number of curriculum and whole school developments. Some pupils, particularly those involved with Pupil Council, Columba 1400 and Senior School Ambassadors have successfully led on a number of developments.

Stranraer Academy shows a continuing capacity for improvement. Considerable progress has been made over the past year in relation to key development priorities identified in the HMI report May 2014 particularly those relating to improving the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning across the school, the effectiveness of monitoring and tracking progress and achievements across the curriculum along with improvements to the team work and leadership of senior managers. I would like to congratulate the school community for its commitment to improvement and on the progress made to date in taking forward HM Inspectors advice.

There are, however, still some aspects which require to be further developed particularly in relation to self-evaluation which the school acknowledges. Self-evaluation needs to become an integral part of all that is going on in the school. This will be achieved by creating a culture across the schools community which places self evaluation at the centre to inform change and measure impact. Dumfries and Galloway Council Education Services will continue to work with the school and its community to build further capacity for improvement and to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.

Yours sincerely



Colin Grant  
Director of Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning