

26 February 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Blairgowrie High School  
Perth & Kinross Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well young people are learning and achieving and how well the school supports young people to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including approaches to evaluating the work of staff, young people's progress in learning from S1 to S6, and how well the school takes account of young people's individual needs. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving young people's education.

**How well do young people learn and achieve?**

Almost all young people are well-behaved, polite and eager to learn. They enjoy working together in pairs and groups. They show one another respect and mutual support. Young people are pleased that behaviour and relationships in the school have improved. Most young people feel safe in school. They do not have a clear enough understanding of their progress in learning and what they could do to improve. Young people's independent learning skills could be developed further.

Young people are developing as responsible citizens, gaining important skills for work and an understanding of the needs of others through charity fundraising events. Senior pupils support and visit Malawi schools to assist with building work and provide football coaching. Through performing well in choirs, brass and string groups, young people gain confidence and a sense of audience. Across the school, staff do not yet collect enough information about young people's literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing, or about their achievements, to ensure they are making appropriate progress. Overall, by the end of S6, young people's attainment in national examinations is improving. From S4 to S6, performance in some measures relating to national examinations is better than, or much better than, schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. In other measures, the school performs less well. The attainment of boys has improved in a number of national measures. Young people with more complex additional support needs are making suitable progress. The proportion of young people going on to positive destinations after school is improving and is now above the national average.

The school needs to work more effectively with partners to support the small number of young people at risk of missing out on their learning.

### **How well does the school support young people to develop and learn?**

Staff know young people well and most form positive relationships with them. A few teachers are using imaginative contexts to support young people's learning. Teachers are now provided with information to help them meet their pupils' needs better. There is scope to develop this further and ensure all staff are aware of how they can help all young people learn. Staff would benefit from professional learning about additional support needs to help them support young people more effectively. Class teachers are not aware enough of learners' experiences, progress and achievements at primary school and as a result not all young people's needs are being suitably met.

Young people are benefiting from a broad general education in S1. In S2/S3, the curriculum is too narrow and, as a result, young people are missing out on important learning experiences and opportunities to develop key skills. With the aim of improving attainment, the school presents young people for Standard Grade examinations in S3. As the school moves towards the full implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, it now needs to review its policy of presenting young people for national examinations in S3. The school is at the very early stages of developing a whole school approach to young people's literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across learning. The curriculum could be enriched through more interdisciplinary learning. From S4 to S6, a significant number of young people are enjoying increased opportunities for extended work experience placements which are developing important skills for life, learning and work. Young people are also able to choose vocational courses such as the Formula One challenge which inspires future engineers. The school now needs to review these options to ensure that all young people are benefiting from making these choices in their learning. There is considerable scope to increase partnership working to enhance young people's learning and achievement and the extent to which the school meets young people's learning needs. The school is at the early stages of developing plans to ensure all young people benefit from personal support in relation to their learning.

### **How well does the school improve the quality of its work?**

The school has a number of processes in place to evaluate the quality of its work. These processes are not yet leading to sufficient improvement. Most teachers reflect on what they do well and what they could do better. A few departments work well together to ensure consistent approaches to assessment. In a few subjects, young people are asked their views about their learning and teachers make changes as a result. Senior managers now need to lead the improvements required in learning, teaching and meeting needs across the school. The headteacher is committed to raising attainment to improve young people's life chances. He has been successful in improving the reputation of the school within the local community. However, he has not provided strong enough strategic leadership to develop Curriculum for Excellence in line with national expectations. Consultation about changes to the curriculum with young people, staff, partners and parents requires improvement. Young people across the school would welcome more opportunities

to take on leadership roles and develop important skills of communication and teamwork.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Young people who are friendly, polite and motivated to learn.
- Improvements to behaviour, and success in improving the reputation of the school within the local community.
- Many staff who are committed, hard-working and keen to make changes and improvements.

We discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Ensure young people's learning in S1 builds more effectively on the levels they have achieved in primary school.
- Continue with recent improvements to support for learning and ensure that all staff understand better how to meet young people's learning needs.
- Develop a culture of self-evaluation which leads to improvements in learning, teaching and young people's achievements.
- Provide stronger leadership for the school, including for the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

### **What happens at the end of the inspection?**

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer along with the local authority will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to evaluate aspects of provision and the progress in improving provision within one year of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Elizabeth Morrison  
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/BlairgowrieHighSchoolPerthandKinross.asp>.

Please contact us if you want to know how to get the report in a different format, for example, in a translation. You can contact us at [enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk) or write to us at BMCT, Education Scotland, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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