

3 June 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Crieff High School
Perth and 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 outdoor learning, self-evaluation, support for pupils and opportunities for leadership. 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?

Young people are enthusiastic learners and achieve well in the school, which is an attractive, well-resourced environment for learning situated within Strathearn Community Campus in Crieff. The campus includes facilities shared with the community such as a library, swimming pool and games hall. In addition, staff from a range of services and agencies are based at the campus, to deliver services on a partnership basis on site or in the wider community. Young people are confident, well behaved, have good relationships with staff and enjoy their learning. Almost all feel safe and well cared for and contribute well to the life of the school and the local community. Most teachers use a range of teaching approaches to create lessons that engage young people and help them to develop their enquiry skills. Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear and there is consistent use of praise to encourage young people to achieve to the best of their ability. In a few lessons teachers need to plan tasks and activities which are more challenging and develop young people's abilities to think more critically. Young people have a good range of opportunities to help shape the development of the school, through committees such as the School Improvement Group. They have the capability to take an even greater role in improving the school's work and in leading learning activities within lessons.

Outdoor learning experiences support young people well to understand and apply their learning in real-life situations. Their experiences are enriched by the range of visits, trips and residential visits which are organised for them, including the Lessons of the Holocaust programme which takes young people to visit Auschwitz, global partnerships and the World War One battlefields visit. Young people are achieving well across a range of sports and cultural activities provided within the school and local

community. There are opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills in these areas. Those involved in volunteering and raising funds for local, national and international charities demonstrate a commitment to the care and welfare of others. The school celebrates the achievements of its young people in a number of ways including the headteacher's daily blog and an annual awards ceremony. The school should continue to develop strategies to capture and profile young people's skills and achievements so that teachers can take account of these when planning lessons. Young people should be made more aware of the skills for learning, life and work that they are developing within the classroom and through their achievements.

Young people are making suitable progress in their learning from S1 to S3. There is scope to improve the pace of learning and level of challenge at these stages. At S4 and S5, the school performs consistently above national averages and in line with schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. At S6, young people make very good progress in their learning. The school generally performs better than those schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds and consistently above national averages. There is room for improvement in performance from S4 to S6 which could be achieved through increased pace and challenge and raised expectations for all young people.

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

Young people are well supported to develop and learn. The school is continuing to develop its curriculum to reflect national and local advice relating to Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers have designed courses to provide relevant and meaningful learning experiences to meet the needs of young people. Staff should continue to evaluate and develop the curriculum to improve progression in young people's learning from S1 to S6. Teachers have worked hard to ensure young people can succeed with gaining new qualifications at National 3, National 4 and National 5 levels. The school also has a good range of Higher and Advanced Higher courses available for young people in S5 and S6. Staff should continue to develop approaches to interdisciplinary learning so that young people can make connections between different areas of learning. The school is making good progress with developing young people's literacy skills across their learning. There is more work to be done to ensure they develop their numeracy skills and health and wellbeing across the curriculum. Staff should continue to develop links with primary schools to ensure that all learning in S1 provides progression in young people's knowledge, understanding and skills.

In most lessons, young people are suitably challenged and supported by learning activities. However, in a few classes, the pace of learning is too slow for some young people and teachers are not consistently meeting the needs of all learners. Support for learning staff provide good support for young people with additional support needs in subject classes and in small groups. Young people with more complex needs are sensitively supported. Support for learning staff run a successful nurture class where young people are helped to develop their social skills. They now need to work more with teachers to improve learning for all young people. They should continue to provide professional learning opportunities for teachers to ensure that young people with additional needs receive the support they need across the school. The school works well with partner agencies to meet young people's needs and makes good provision for young people with autism. These young people respond well to the

school's Therapet dogs, Blaze and Orchid, who are specially trained to promote health, hope and healing.

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

The headteacher is committed to developing partnerships with campus staff and the wider community to improve the quality of the school's work. The school's approaches to improvement planning are beginning to have a positive impact on young people's learning experiences and achievements. More needs to be done to involve partners in the initial planning stages rather than once the priorities have been confirmed so that their views are taken account of fully. Senior managers hold Business Breaks with groups of young people during morning intervals to discuss how the school can continue to improve. They also have regular meetings with principal teachers to monitor their plans and the progress of their departments. Senior managers are using the information gathered from these activities to plan for improvement. The school has provided good opportunities for staff to lead initiatives including the three teacher groups which are focusing on improving learning and teaching across the school. Almost all parents are happy with the school's work overall. However, they would like the school to continue to improve how it communicates with them. The school has an extensive range of information about the quality of its work. It should now ensure that it makes full use of this information to improve young people's experiences and achievements.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Confident, enthusiastic and self-motivated young people who are achieving well.
- The headteacher's commitment to developing partnerships between the school, the campus staff and the wider community.
- The commitment of staff to improving outcomes for young people.
- The attractive, well-resourced environment for learning.

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

- Continue to ensure improvements for young people through self-evaluation with partners.
- Continue to improve the quality of learning and teaching to meet the needs of all young people more effectively.
- Continue to develop the curriculum to enable young people to attain as highly as possible.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress.

Ken McAra
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/CriefHighSchoolPerthandKinross.asp>

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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