



**Perth and Kinross Council**  
**Education and Children's Services**  
**Perth Academy**



**Extended Learning and Achievement Visit (ELAV)**

**14-16 June 2016**

## **BACKGROUND**

To support the school in the process of self-evaluation, a team of officers from across Education and Children's Services visited Perth Academy between 14 and 16 June 2016 and, in partnership with the School's Senior Management Team, undertook a range of evaluative activities that formed the ELAV. The themes for the review were Achievement, Learning and Leadership. These themes were subject to scrutiny through the core Quality Indicators from *How good is our school?*, and by using the most recent Education Scotland Advice Note which outlines the raised expectations in relation to all schools' implementation of all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence.

Through negotiation with the School, certain aspects were subject to particular scrutiny, namely: Personalised Support, and in considering aspects of universal and targeted support for young people. The ELAV also evaluated the Specialist Provision for young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

During the visit the ELAV team had conversations with the Headteacher, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Principal Teachers and Teachers; conducted approximately 60 classroom visits; reviewed documentation including sampling of learners' work; and met with groups of learners and parents.

At the time of the visit the school role was 960. The Senior Management Team consisted of: Headteacher; 2 deputy headteachers (school improvement); and one deputy Headteacher (support). Attendance in session 2015-16 was 93%.

## **ACHIEVEMENT**

### **Strengths**

Young people in Perth Academy are, in the majority, proud of their school and are happy and courteous who learn and achieve in a safe and caring environment. Learners are successful and contribute effectively to the life of the school and wider community by engaging in a range of academic and wider achievement activities. Young people in the Specialist Provision are positive about their experience; they are happy and feel they are listened to and given choice.

Achievement is enhanced in the Broad General Education (BGE) and Senior Phase for young people under the recently developed framework of “Things to do at Perth Academy”. The activities under this initiative embrace employability, enterprise and creativity, volunteering, residential and outdoor excursions, leadership and innovation, citizenship and cultural activities and enable young people to develop a wide and varied profile of achievement and for the development of skills for learning, life and work.

Young people engage in a wide range of physical activity and extra-curricular opportunities and Perth Academy maintains its Gold status from Sportscotland for the breadth of activities offered and the continued growth in leadership and development opportunities.

The Challenge to Make a Change conference led by ambitious young people from Perth Academy provided a platform for over 200 young females to challenge attitudes and prejudice towards gender inequality and was recognised as highly effective practice in developing responsible citizens.

Perth Academy’s priorities for raising attainment and achievement are to:

- raise the bar for all, through universal approaches to improve attainment, achievement and outcomes for young people
- close the gaps that exist for the more disadvantaged learners, including those from the most deprived areas.

Attainment in the Broad General Education as reported under literacy and numeracy developments, with young people being secure at Curriculum for Excellence Third Level or above, continues to display a trend of improved performance and levels are considerably above PKC averages for literacy. Numeracy levels are similar to the PKC averages.

Perth Academy has seen an improving 3 year trend in the percentage of school leavers attaining literacy and numeracy at Scottish Certificate Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 5. In 2015 this was 62%, higher than the Perth and Kinross and national average, and the School’s virtual comparator. In 2015 68% of young people left school with at least one higher qualification, outperforming the virtual comparator.

Young people in the lowest 20% and middle 60% of attainment cohorts are performing in excess of their national and virtual comparators.

In breadth and depth measures, and the 7 key performance indicators measured locally, Perth Academy outperforms its virtual comparators.

The Enterprise 16 project provides an innovative opportunity for young people not undertaking SQA exams to access a range of engagements and activities that stimulates their interests in potential employment and further education options.

They engage with locals from successful business backgrounds and develop essential skills for their futures.

### **Areas for Improvement**

There continued to be an improving trend of young people entering into positive destinations and post-school participation with 94.5% of Perth Academy school leavers entering a positive destination, as indicated by the June 2016 data, which is above local and national trends. It is recommended that the School maintains a focus of targeted interventions early in secondary school, and through accessing information from associated primary schools. A particular focus should be in the further development of the profiling process that will track young people's achievements, interests and progress.

The School has identified that young people from the most deprived areas underperform against their virtual comparator and national data. The school has robust data and has undertaken a detailed analysis of participation in school activity and this will now enable for planning and action to tackle inequalities of outcome.

There is the opportunity for further and consistent engagement with the data available through Insight across the school and at all levels. The enhanced scrutiny of Insight data should inform curriculum planning, self-evaluation activities and allow for the identification of gaps in achievement and attainment and shape planning for improvement.

There is a need, in the Specialist Provision to consider learning and teaching approaches and pedagogical and methodological approaches that are individualised with enhanced access to subject specialist teachers.

Young people indicate that while they are consulted on matters which could lead to improvements in their experience at Perth Academy they are not of the opinion that their suggestions and views are listened to readily, or acted upon.

## **LEARNING**

### **Strengths**

There are positive and strong relationships in the majority of classes and the learning climate and environment are conducive to good quality learning and teaching.

Staff are highly committed to providing quality learning and teaching experiences for young people and in the majority of lessons activities and tasks are well planned, build on prior learning and allow for progression in learning. Assessment is for Learning techniques are deployed effectively and a range of questioning approaches are utilised to establish understanding and areas of development. The use of learning intentions and success criteria are prevalent and stimulate learners to think, build curiosity and express their views.

Significant work has been undertaken by the school to provide alternatives to exclusion, A2E, and to reduce the number of exclusion incidents, including repeated exclusions for young people with a focus on those with ASN and from the most deprived backgrounds. This has resulted in the number of incidents and the number of individual pupils excluded being more than halved.

Young people accessing targeted interventions and support through the Pupil Support Centre are engaged and treated with sensitivity. Staff skilfully develop language and ambition while maintaining boundaries and targets for improvement. Strong partnerships exist in targeted interventions and provisions that enable collaboration and strong outcomes.

In the Specialist Provision the work that has taken place to review timetabling and to provide a more continuous transition is to be commended and there has been the development of links with subject teachers and setting up of small group teaching by these subject specialist teachers.

Personalisation and choice in the senior phase is strong and enables young people to tailor their learning and their course options. There are established and positive links with partners including Perth College and business links, and young people make very good use of the options available to them through the Perth City Campus. The development of senior phase options and inter-disciplinary learning approaches in the Specialist Provision has enhanced their curriculum.

Young people and parents, in the main, feel that they have a good learning and achievement experience in Perth Academy and welcome the wide range of opportunities on offer, the commitment of staff and the ethos and climate of the school. Parents of young people in the Specialist Provision feel that partnerships are strong.

### **Areas for Improvement**

It is essential that approaches to the differentiation of tasks and activities for young people are developed further and become evident in the majority of classes, in order to maximise learners' experiences. It is recommended that all staff have access to, and engage with, the information available, in relation to the additional support needs of young people in their classes, including those from the Specialist Provision, and that programmes of work are planned accordingly. This approach will also ensure that the pace of learning responds to the needs of all learners, takes account of learning targets and barriers to learning, and is suitably challenging and extends learners to achieve to the best of their ability. This should be complimented with a refresh for staff in the design, development and deployment of differentiation activities and any necessary professional learning associated with additional support needs.

It is the responsibility of all to develop individual skillsets to ensure the universal support entitlement is delivered and there is a need for teaching staff to engage in the shaping and reviewing of Home Room and personal support approaches. Young people feel that approaches to personal support are not resulting in them feeling more confident as learners, and they do not equip them with the tools to improve in achievement, attainment and in their wellbeing. There is a whole school approach in place with the processes, materials and mechanisms that are available to support feedback on progress, study skills, learning conversations, health and wellbeing and wider achievement.

The School should consider a review of the Pupil Support structures including the roles and remits of staff and the level and detail of support provided to young people. This would provide clarity of approach for staff working to support young people, young people who receive support, their parents and the mainstream classes and teachers support will be provided in, and for whom. It is recommended that this includes details of the targeted interventions, supports and provisions that are in place also.

In the Specialist Provision individualised planning should be undertaken that indicates differentiated literacy and numeracy needs and strategies to support young people and that this is supported by a quality assurance framework developed that seeks feedback and promotes teacher peer discussion on appropriate pace and challenge. It is also necessary to consider more comprehensive transition plans developed from educational needs identified at primary School.

The Extended Leadership Team expressed that the continued good ethos and learning environment of the school would be enhanced by comprehensive information on the referrals system being more transparent, its impact and how it leads to improved outcomes for learners and staff.

There is an opportunity for the school to refresh methodological and pedagogical approaches to learning and teaching, such as Co-operative learning techniques that build community, develop responsibility and enhance the skills of independent learning and learning from peers, and for good practice to be shared across the School.

## **LEADERSHIP**

### **Strengths**

The Headteacher and the School's Senior Management Team display a high level of commitment, a motivation and a drive to secure improvement priorities as set out in the Improvement Plan and in their self-evaluation practice. There is clear direction from the Headteacher that Perth Academy is striving to be a fully inclusive school.

The Extended Leadership Team, comprising principal teachers' curriculum, guidance and support for learning, are committed to school improvement and display a willingness to contribute to conversations and developing the skills of their staff. The ELT indicated a desire to express their views further, and through a range of mechanisms and approaches.

The Senior Management Team and Extended Leadership Team are supported by teaching staff and ancillary staff that are committed to the school's values and ethos and provide a wide and varied educational and social experience for young people.

Young people demonstrate high levels of leadership skills, are very good representatives of their school community and take pride in their school and appreciate the experiences on offer to them at Perth Academy.

The Headteacher and the Senior Management Team have extensive and robust data and benchmarks that map out the profile of the school in relation to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. This detailed level of data is enabling the school to progress with planning and action in tackling inequalities of outcome. Analysis of attendance, breakfast club attendees, participants on the Career Ready programme, exclusions data, attainments in literacy and numeracy, free meal entitlement and uptake, international and residential trips' data, leadership opportunities for young people, music instruction, S4 work experience, Perth City Campus and Perth College course uptake have developed a comprehensive profile of young people from the most and least deprived areas and how they engage with certain aspects of school life.

### **Areas for Improvement**

It is recognised that there is a need to develop an enhanced communication strategy that encompasses whole school developments, universal approaches to, and developments in, support and targeted interventions, including the Specialist Provision. This should include communication on the roles and remits of pupil support teachers, and the deployment of pupil support assistants. It should detail and set out the support mechanisms in place for young people with ASN in mainstream provision and in targeted supports and should be communicated to staff, principal teachers, teachers and parents, as appropriate.

It is recommended that the School considers its mechanisms for communicating to parents who felt that they were able to access information on certain school matters and would welcome clarity on others, including personal support structures, reporting procedures and course choice options. Parents also indicated a desire to become more involved in the life of the wider school community and for their views to be sought.

The School's self-evaluation and monitoring programme and quality assurance processes are structured and detail the annual academic calendar programme of

self-evaluative activities. However, it is recommended that there is a refreshed whole-school approach to self-evaluation that grows a natural culture of continuous self-evaluation for self-improvement. It should also be confirmed that there is a shared understanding across the school of developments presented in self-evaluation presentations.

## **CONCLUSION**

During the visit the team found that young people and staff were very welcoming and approachable and willing to engage and express their views. They take pride in their school and readily commit to the wider school community and life. Young people are articulate, are developing the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence and engage in extensive wider achievement opportunities. There are positive relationships that enable good quality learning and teaching and allow for high levels of achievement and attainment. It is with confidence that the recommendations set out in this report by the ELAV team will be brought about by the school and will lead to continuous improvement.

[HMI Report 2010](#)

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