

14 February 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Brechin High School  
Angus Council**

In June 2012, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Angus Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in April 2014. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

**Improve the quality of learning and teaching.**

Young people are very positive about their new school building and the opportunities it will bring. Most young people are respectful to each other and their teachers and behave well in class. In most lessons, young people are attentive and willing to engage in their learning. While there is evidence of good practice, the quality of learning and teaching is still too inconsistent. In many classes, however, teachers' expectations for young people's behaviour and for what they can achieve are still too low. In these classes, pupils do not take sufficient care over their work and are not sufficiently challenged by their learning. Across the school, too many lessons are overly teacher-led and young people are not sufficiently independent or active in their learning. Young people respond enthusiastically to opportunities to engage actively in their learning and when given the opportunity they work collaboratively to lead and evaluate their own learning. Most teachers now share the aims of lessons with young people but there is scope to improve how this is done, focusing consistently on what young people are expected to learn during the lesson. Young people are not yet sufficiently clear about their progress within the broad general education from S1-S3 nor how they can improve their learning. Young people now have more opportunities to discuss their learning and progress with teachers, for example, during form classes. The quality of this experience, however, is too variable across the school. Although there is some good practice in individual departments, young people across the school do not have sufficient opportunities to give their views and to make suggestions for improvement. Overall, the quality of young people's learning experiences is too inconsistent.

## **Increase expectations of what young people can learn and achieve and raise attainment.**

There is considerable scope for staff to raise their expectations to ensure improved outcomes for all young people. Staff do not make sufficient use of available data, including that relating to progress made at primary school, to monitor and track how well young people are making progress from S1 to S3. Approaches taken to evaluate the progress which young people have made in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3 are not yet sufficiently reliable or rigorous. In several subjects at the senior phase, too few young people achieve passes in National Qualifications. Overall, the attainment of young people at the senior phase remains below that of other young people with similar needs and backgrounds from across the country and below national averages. Young people, especially those at the senior phase, benefit from opportunities to participate in, and receive accreditation for a range of achievements. Staff should build on previous good practice to ensure that they are able to monitor and celebrate all young people's achievements in and out of school.

## **Ensure agreed targets for improvement are delivered through more effective leadership at all levels.**

The headteacher has successfully encouraged staff to take on leadership roles and play a greater part in school improvement. Most staff have an appropriate understanding of the school's priorities and have good opportunities to contribute to the school improvement plan. Some staff now lead whole school initiatives, such as, the development of interdisciplinary courses at S1 and S2 and by contributing to working groups. Middle leaders now increasingly take responsibility for school improvements. Overall, there is a need for greater consistency in the actions of senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers in taking forward the school's key priorities. Senior leaders have identified the need to improve the curriculum in order to raise attainment. They now need to develop the curriculum further to ensure that all young people follow appropriate curricular pathways which will help them to improve their attainment in National Qualifications. All staff need to share higher expectations of what young people can achieve, agree more consistent standards of young people's learning, behaviour and effort and ensure that approaches to tracking progress are implemented consistently. Senior leaders need to ensure that agreed procedures and plans for improvement are being implemented consistently across the school.

## **What happens next?**

The school has made insufficient progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Angus Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 12 months of publishing this letter. We will discuss with Angus Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Alistair Brown  
HM Inspector

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