

30 May 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Kincorth Academy
Aberdeen City Council**

In May 2015, 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 Aberdeen City Council. 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.

Review and improve the curriculum to ensure all young people can progress in their learning and achieve as highly as possible.

The school has undergone significant staffing changes since the original inspection in March 2015. With the arrival of the new acting headteacher in September 2016, important improvements are being taken forward to the curriculum and learning and teaching. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that staffing levels are maintained effectively, thus maximising the learning opportunities for young people. In school session 2015-16, young people in S4 were able to take six courses leading to qualifications. This has helped to improve the number of National 5 qualifications achieved by young people. Staff, young people and parents have been included in a recent review of the school curriculum. Young people are currently making choices for session 2017-2018. These choices offer an improved range of course options, some of which are vocational in nature and will be delivered through working with partners such as North East Scotland College. This includes the introduction of Foundation Apprenticeships as a choice for senior pupils next session. Young people's learning benefits from their participation in a range of courses offered beyond the school. The curriculum now takes better account of young people's ongoing learning, providing them with appropriate courses to take their learning forward. The school should continue to ensure that all learners experience pathways which meet their needs and which are sufficiently aspirational. Young people would benefit from the opportunity to have more time discussing their curriculum choices with a teacher who knows them well. These conversations should be supported by reliable information about their progress and provide advice concerning pathways to extend their learning beyond school. The headteacher and his staff are aware of the need to continue working closely with colleagues from Torry Academy. They are ensuring that curricular provision in Kincorth Academy and Torry Academy is aligned

as best as possible in preparation for the transition of pupils to Lochside Academy in 2018.

Further develop the use of self-evaluation evidence to focus on improvements which will have the greatest impact on raising attainment.

Along with the new senior leadership team, the acting headteacher has identified and prioritised appropriate aspects of the school requiring immediate improvement. Progress to date is evident in the commitment displayed by all to the agreed vision and values adopted by the school. There are improved lines of communication including the responsive use of digital media. Recent improvement strategies are focussing on learning and teaching, including the use of “visible learning” approaches and improving opportunities for progression. These strategies will be important in raising the attainment of young people. There is now a comprehensive plan to address areas for improvement identified in the original inspection. This includes plans to increase the involvement of all staff and young people in evaluating aspects of the work of the school.

There are improvements in attainment in some important measures. This includes: improvements in the percentage of young people attaining well in literacy and numeracy on leaving school and improvements in the percentage of young people attaining National 5 qualifications in S4. However, the attainment of those leaving school is still currently below that of other young people with similar needs and backgrounds across Scotland. The school now needs to ensure that all young people make well-informed decisions about their next steps in learning. There are too many young people not following an appropriate gradient of learning to ensure success. Most young people leave school to enter a positive destination though the percentage leaving to go to higher education fell in 2016.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Aberdeen City Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return with Aberdeen City Council to carry out a review of the school within 12 months. We will discuss with Aberdeen City Council the details of this review. When we return to review the progress of the school, Aberdeen Council will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Carol McDonald
HM Inspector

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.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0131 244 4330, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.