

19 December 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

In November 2022, HM Inspectors published a letter on Pebbles Academy, Dunfermline. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Pebbles Care Limited. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to young people and worked closely with the head of education and staff. We heard from the head of education 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the head of education. 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.

Senior leaders and education staff need to work closely with psychologists and care staff to improve young people's attendance as an immediate priority. In doing so, they should aspire to have all young people following bespoke full-time learning programmes.

The school has made good progress in this area. A more strategic approach has been taken by staff to tracking young people's attendance and engagement in their learning at Pebbles Academy since the initial inspection. Senior leaders and staff have been working hard to improve this practice. For example, for those not yet attending school, staff make daily phone calls to care homes to check on young people's involvement in their learning. They record and monitor this information. Staff also record and review reasons for young people not engaging in learning. There is an emerging trend in school data that, in recent months, engagement and attendance is improving, both for individuals and for all learners. The school should continue to work with young people to re-engage them further in their education.

Teachers need to develop the curriculum particularly at the senior phase. Young people need to access a broader range of learning pathways which provide accreditation and are in line with their interests and aspirations.

The school has made good progress in this area. Senior leaders have brought about significant changes at the school. They have reviewed the skillset and remits of all teaching and support staff. All teachers now have responsibility for a range of curricular areas. This ensures that all young people experience learning across most curricular areas. Staff modify the curriculum if it is not engaging young people appropriately, adapting it to meet their individual needs. Support staff help young people well to access their learning across the curriculum. All young people in both the broad general education (BGE) and senior phase take part in a range of subject areas across the week. These include English, maths, social subjects, music, information and communication technology (ICT), personal and social education (PSE) and science. Senior leaders should continue with their current plans to develop languages further within the BGE.

Senior leaders and staff need to improve young people’s attainment and achievement. In taking this forward, senior leaders must identify purposeful ways to measure the performance of the school. This will help determine what needs to improve in order to raise young people’s attainment and achievement.

The school has made some progress in this area. Following the initial inspection, the new head of education led the development of a revised and improved tracking approach to record young people’s overall achievement and attainment. Helpfully, it also includes young people’s individual learning and wellbeing targets. These are agreed and discussed with young people, helping them to make progress in their learning. As a result, the school now has a more comprehensive system which can be added to as appropriate by both education and care staff. Senior leaders and staff have increased the number and range of qualifications which young people can attain. Last session, following the initial inspection, this included ICT, science and personal achievement awards at National 2, and music, people & society and science at National 3. As a result, young people’s attainment has started to improve. As planned, the school should continue to expand its offer of subjects and encourage young people to attain at as high a level as possible. Work with partner agencies has further broadened the curriculum for young people.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within one year of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement. This may include another inspection visit. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the improvements the school has made and outlining any further action, agreed with Pebbles Care Limited that we intend to take.

Ken McAra
HM Inspector