

5 March 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In May 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on Golspie High School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and The Highland 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.

**Develop the leadership of staff and young people so that they are taking a stronger role in securing better-paced change and improvement.**

HM Inspectors have found some improvements at Golspie High School. There is scope for further improvements, particularly in raising the attainment of young people.

Senior leaders have worked well with young people, parents and the community in recapturing the vision, values and aims of the school. These are now more specific to Golspie High School. Teachers should now ascertain how they can embed the vision, values and aims within their practice. The headteacher, supported by the council, has worked hard to secure teachers for the school. The council has funded additional staffing for the school. The headteacher has changed staffing structures to help improve the school. The pace of change is not yet brisk enough. Most staff remain committed to leading change in their subjects. Young people and their parents appreciate the way that recent work has taken account of their views. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to use young people's and parents' views to have a greater impact on improving experiences in the classroom and beyond. They also need to continue to engage more effectively with parents about their children's learning and how they can provide additional support. This would help teachers develop a better understanding of young people's learning needs.

The headteacher now needs to ensure a relentless focus on raising standards in learning, teaching and attainment where a difference is still required. Teachers should continue to take forward actions to raise attainment. For this, they would benefit from subject-specialist professional learning and discussion. Senior leaders have put systems in place for tracking and monitoring progress, and to improve learning and teaching. Faculty heads are working with teachers to generate better information on where and for whom attainment needs to improve. Senior leaders need to have a higher presence across the school to ensure that the information on progress is being better used to raise attainment. They need to ensure that teachers are taking responsibility for high-quality learning and teaching, with which young people engage.

**Improve further the quality and consistency of learning and teaching to raise attainment and ensure all young people achieve as highly as possible.**

Importantly some teachers are spending more time together sharing and discussing how to improve learning and teaching. All teachers should now continue to build on the most effective practice within the school. Teachers of additional support needs and pupil support assistants are effectively ensuring that young people who need help with their learning are achieving better. Across the school, young people are clearer on the purpose of lessons. Most teachers are ensuring a more structured approach to planning assessment, and recording and analysing information from assessment. They now need to make more use of this information to underpin their planning of good quality learning and teaching for their individual pupils. This should focus on the use of quality questioning, selecting learning activities to allow progression and enabling a brisker pace of learning. Teachers need to have higher expectations of what young people are capable of achieving. In a few cases, young people's behaviour is getting in the way of their learning. This is not always managed well by teachers. Across the school, staff and young people are beginning to make more use of digital technology. Senior leaders have plans to increase the availability of laptop technology to potentially enhance learning and teaching, and to prepare young people for employment. Teachers are better at helping young people understand the level at which they are working. They now need to be consistently clarifying with young people how they can make better progress, and attain more highly in qualifications.

Senior leaders and teachers are starting to put in place additional support to help young people improve standards. By the end of S3, the school continues to report that almost all young people achieved expected levels in listening, talking and reading. Most young people are reported to be achieving expected levels in writing and numeracy. Teachers recognise that they are still working on increasing the reliability of the levels they report as having been achieved in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. At the time of the further inspection, senior managers were beginning to monitor progress and attainment in curricular areas and subjects in S1–S3. As such, senior leaders are not yet able to report on how well young people are attaining in S1–S3 over time. In S4–S6, there is an ongoing need to ensure that young people's attainment is improving by the time they leave school. In 2017, most young people who left Golspie High School attained literacy at SCQF level 5. For numeracy, most leavers attained numeracy at SCQF level 4. Senior leaders continue to increase the range of learning pathways in the senior phase to meet the needs of young people. They are aware that too many young people are not receiving a qualification in a few subjects. Almost all young people progress from school to a positive destination.

**Improve staff's understanding of their roles and responsibilities in supporting the wellbeing of all young people. There should be a focus on building an ethos of mutual respect in which every member of the school community feels valued and supported. Positive relationships and shared high expectations for all should underpin the work of the school.**

Overall, staff have made progress in improving aspects of this priority. The headteacher regularly reinforces the importance of wellbeing and related responsibilities. Principal teachers and staff now have clearer responsibilities for supporting young people who need assistance with their learning. They provide professional learning and advice to staff, as well as helping in class. As a result, young people are making better progress in some areas of their learning. Since the inspection, a range of professional learning sessions and meetings

have been organised on wellbeing. Some of these have been delivered by the council, with further professional learning planned. Staff have increased their awareness and understanding of their role in actively promoting the wellbeing of young people. Young people are showing an improved understanding of how good health and wellbeing is central to effective learning and preparation for successful independent living. They are beginning to demonstrate the importance of showing mutual respect. The majority of young people feel that staff treat them fairly and with respect. Teachers need to ensure that young people's learning in personal and social education has a greater focus on health and wellbeing, including supporting young people's mental health.

### What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with The Highland Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 12 months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with The Highland 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.

Joan C. Esson  
HM Inspector