

13 March 2018

Dear Parent/Carer,

**Queen Margaret Academy
South Ayrshire Council**

In January 2017, 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 South Ayrshire 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.

The school needs to improve strategic leadership to ensure that planning for improvement and well-paced development of the curriculum are underpinned by a strong, shared vision and effective self-evaluation.

- There is now a clear understanding of the central role of the recently refreshed vision values and aims as important drivers for change. This includes a greater reflection of the importance of the Catholic faith in the school. The school has benefited from very valuable support from the local authority and other outside partners to enable staff to demonstrate important improvements that are benefitting learners. Activities such as improved analysis of qualifications achieved and the wider range of school professional learning activities are assisting staff to understand the benefits of identifying strengths and areas for improvement.
- There has been limited improvement in strategic leadership since the previous inspection visit. Senior managers acknowledge that overall strategic leadership has to improve further to enable the school to achieve its fullest potential. During this visit the same concerns were repeated by staff, pupils and parents about the quality of strategic leadership, indicating the need for much improved relationships, to enable all staff to work together as a unified team.

To build on the eagerness and enthusiasm of all its young people, the school now needs to improve the consistency of learning and teaching to lead to the best possible outcomes for all learners in all curriculum areas.

- Learning and teaching is improving since the last inspection visit. Relationships between staff and young people remain positive and overall, young people enjoy their learning. Young people are appreciative of the additional efforts teachers

make to support them to achieve well. There are now more effective approaches in place to engage young people better in their learning. Staff and young people use assessment more purposefully to plan learning and evaluate progress.

- Most lessons are well-structured and staff explanations, instructions and demonstrations are clear and helpful. Most staff employ a variety of learning approaches, including group work and the use of digital technology, to engage their learners well. Building on the improving practice already in place, staff should continue to improve the quality of learning and teaching further. The focus should be on the consistent delivery of high quality learning experiences that challenge, engage and meet the needs of every learner. Young people would welcome more opportunities to help shape improvements in the school.

The school should develop further young people's understanding of the effective use of assessment which will enable them to identify clearly what they need to do to improve.

- Positive progress has been made in taking forward assessment and moderation developments. Class teachers are using a wide variety of approaches to assess pupil progress and inform the future planning of learning. Teachers are beginning to use the National Benchmarks to inform their judgements about learner progress. Staff should continue with their plans to develop tracking arrangements further to focus upon specific groups of young people, especially those learners who face additional challenges. There is also scope to involve young people and their parents more in discussions about their progress and next steps in learning.

The school should continue with its work to develop wellbeing programmes that are relevant to the needs of young people. This should include well considered approaches to track and monitor progress in this area to improve the wellbeing outcomes for all learners.

- Progress has been made since the last inspection to take forward a more strategic approach to ensure improved health and wellbeing for all young people. Staff and learners have recently adopted a focus on children's rights to support wellbeing across the school. Young people appreciate the new self-referral system in place to support learners in improving their mental health.
- Further development work is needed to ensure young people have enough opportunities to discuss their wellbeing, learning and achievement. Staff need to develop their plans to support learners with additional needs, using well considered targets, and record these formally on clearly set out support plans.
- The school needs to continue to develop their support systems to improve overall attendance, including the attendance of those young people who are absent for significant periods of time.

Additional analysis/observations to support further improvement in attainment:

- Overall, the school is continuing to make progress in supporting young people to achieve positive outcomes. The attainment of young people in National Qualifications in S4, S5 and S6 is generally in line with young people with similar needs and backgrounds across Scotland. The school continues to have a high staying on rate from S4 to S5 and from S5 to S6. Almost all leavers move into a positive destination, including those leaving at the end of S4.
- The school has taken steps to improve attainment in mathematics and understands the need to continue this work as a key priority. Achievement continues to be a strong feature of the school with successes celebrated well.

What happens next?

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

Aileen Monaghan
HM Inspector

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