

23 April 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Invergordon Academy. 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 and at other aspects of the school's work proposed by the headteacher. 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.

**Address challenging staffing issues and improve young people's experiences in learning, teaching and assessment to ensure their learning needs are met effectively across all curriculum areas.**

The school leadership team, working with The Highland Council, has made important progress in addressing staffing issues at the school. Almost all staff vacancies have been filled over the last year. Senior leaders have worked creatively with local authority, third sector and community partners to increase the range of young people's curricular experiences. For example, young people access learning through the local authority's online provision, distance learning courses and through college partners. School leaders should continue to address staffing challenges in the school if they arise.

School staff have made important progress in improving learning, teaching and assessment. Teachers have worked together to develop a learning, teaching and assessment policy. This has been supported by a strong focus on professional learning for teachers, which has been well supported by the local authority. Staff at all levels in the school should continue to work with young people to develop a clearer shared understanding of expectations about high quality learning, teaching and assessment.

Young people are benefitting from increasingly positive learning experiences. In a majority of lessons, young people are now experiencing opportunities to assess their own and each other's work. Teachers work collaboratively and enthusiastically to share effective practice that leads to increased motivation for young people. School staff should, as planned, continue to develop classroom approaches that enable young people to take more responsibility for their learning. This includes increasing further teachers' use of effective questioning to deepen learning and create opportunities for young people to develop their critical thinking.

Staff have made some progress in improving approaches to meet young people's needs in their learning. In a majority of lessons teachers are planning tasks and activities which take account of young people's different needs. In the most effective lessons staff develop materials and activities to ensure young people are able to learn successfully. Teachers should continue to develop the effectiveness of this work to ensure all young people experience appropriate pace and challenge in their learning.

**Further develop systems for tracking and monitoring young people's progress and attainment. These should support staff in providing appropriate interventions that help young people to maximise their opportunities for success.**

Staff have made important progress in aspects of this area for improvement. Senior leaders have recently introduced a whole-school system for tracking and monitoring young people's progress and attainment. Teachers work well with colleagues within and beyond the school and now have greater confidence in judging learners' progress against national standards. Senior leaders need now to plan further professional learning for staff to maximise the impact of the new whole-school tracking and monitoring system.

Staff now monitor more effectively the progress of young people who require additional support for their learning. Young people benefit from more consistent, timely and appropriate support measures being put in place.

The school needs more time to be able to demonstrate that the improvements in this area are having a positive impact on outcomes for young people.

**Raise attainment, especially in relation to young people's literacy and numeracy qualifications and their attainment in S4.**

Attainment in 2022/23 showed some signs of improvement, although senior leaders acknowledge that further improvement is required. Middle leaders in the school are now much clearer about how to analyse attainment data in their subject areas, and their responsibilities in developing approaches to raising attainment. There is scope for teachers across the curriculum to develop approaches to target setting to support the monitoring of progress in S1-S3. This will help teachers to identify at an earlier stage young people who would benefit from support to help them to attain as highly as possible.

Staff have worked in various ways to increase the attainment of young people in literacy and numeracy. For example, teachers have revised S1-S3 courses and have worked with colleagues in local primary schools and other secondary schools to confirm their understanding of national assessment standards. As a result, attainment in literacy and numeracy has begun to improve in S1-S3 and in the senior phase. However, it is too early to identify sustained patterns of improvement in literacy and numeracy attainment.

In summary, senior leaders have worked well with staff at all levels to create an ethos where raising attainment is seen as a shared responsibility. Various systems are being introduced which aim to ensure that young people attain as highly as possible. It is too early, however, to identify sustained patterns of improvements in attainment. The school needs more time to be able to show that these new systems are having a significant impact on young people's attainment.

### What happens next?

The school has made some important progress since the original inspection. We will ask The Highland Council for a report on progress within 18 months of the publication of this letter. 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 The Highland Council, that we intend to take.

Donald Paterson  
HM Inspector