

26 February 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In December 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on Eden Park Academy, Muirkirk. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and a representative from Pebbles Care. 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 more rigorous approaches to self-evaluation and school improvement with a clear focus on improving outcomes for young people.

Since coming into post in June 2018, the headteacher has introduced a more rigorous approach to self-evaluation across the school and a clear sense of direction linked to school improvement. In taking this forward, she has been ably supported by the head of education. School staff are more involved in self-reflective activities and are given more opportunities to contribute to whole school improvement. The school council is starting to play a more prominent role. Young people are influencing the life of the school through planning school trips and contributing to a review of the physical education programme.

The school has in place an improvement plan focused exclusively on developing the curriculum including programmes and courses across each of the curricular areas. The school has made a positive start in taking forward these priorities. However, the school improvement plan is overly reliant on the views of senior managers and does not take enough account of other self-evaluative information such as the views of young people, parents and staff. The school improvement plan does not yet include some of the immediate priorities of the school. For example, the school needs to focus on supporting young people who are currently on part-time timetables.

Develop the curriculum in line with national advice and guidance.

The school aspires to offer an appropriate range of curricular areas with a focus on developing young people's skills. The school now offers an increased range of curricular areas including science and social studies. This is leading to young people being able to attain a wider range of qualifications at the senior phase. The development of young people's wellbeing is now planned for throughout the curriculum. Community-based excursions support young people to develop their literacy and social skills in unfamiliar settings. The curriculum also has a strong focus on ensuring young people are prepared for their life after school. The development of skills for life and work supports most young people to move into employment, training or further education when they leave school. Staff need to continue to develop the curriculum, engaging with partners as planned, to ensure young people access learning which is appropriately challenging and supports their aspirations and interests.

Improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching approaches and raise expectations of what young people can achieve.

All staff have a sound understanding of each young person's social and emotional needs. They are adept at developing positive relationships with young people and show them high levels of respect. Most lessons are planned to allow for more practical learning and a range of resources, including digital technologies, are used well to make learning both challenging and enjoyable. This supports young people to be more motivated and engaged in their learning. Teachers use knowledge of young people's prior learning to plan learning activities. This is resulting in lessons being more personalised to each young person's needs and interests. The local community is used well to enhance young people's learning. This supports young people to access a wide range of outdoor learning activities and broadens their learning across a range of curricular areas. Staff need to continue to develop creative and imaginative approaches to learning and teaching to more effectively support young people with ongoing issues of attendance and engagement.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within a 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, that we intend to take.

Steven McPherson
HM Inspector