

11 December 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

In December 2015, HM Inspectors published a letter on Bo'ness Academy. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Falkirk Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in February 2017. 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, as 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.

Ensure that the use of self-evaluation evidence focuses on improvements which will have the greatest impact on raising attainment.

Since the last inspection there has been a significant change in staffing, including the appointment of new senior leaders. The headteacher demonstrates highly effective leadership skills, which are complemented by his team of depute headteachers. They are raising the aspirations of staff and young people reflected in the school motto 'Be the best you can be'. The depute headteachers work strongly as a team and are providing clear direction to staff with consistent expectations. They have streamlined improvement planning identifying a more manageable set of priorities for improvement. These have been positively welcomed by staff who report that the pace of change is now more manageable.

Staff working in teams continue to drive forward many improvement priorities and are now able to evidence the impact of their work on young people. Faculty leaders also have a more prominent role in driving forward improvements within their respective departments and faculties. They are benefitting from professional learning aimed at developing their leadership skills and qualities. Teachers are also taking forward improvements within a range of areas including the curriculum, learning and teaching, and self-evaluation. They are working more collaboratively across the school sharing practice with one another.

Young people are also increasingly involved in identifying strengths and areas for improvement and are playing a more active role across the school. Commendably, the newly established pupil leadership teams comprise a number of young people from S1 through to S6 helping them to develop their leadership skills. Overall, there is a stronger culture of self-evaluation across the school.

Considerable work has been undertaken to improving learning and teaching in the school. We found young people more engaged in their learning, aware of what they were learning and what successful learning looks like. They are more aware of their strengths and areas for improvement. There is further scope for teachers to use assessment to gather on-going evidence on young people's progress in learning to inform next steps. Overall, there is greater consistency in the quality of learning, teaching and assessment across the school.

Review and improve the curriculum to meet the needs of all young people better and improve their progress and attainment.

Senior leaders have reviewed the curriculum in consultation with young people, parents and staff. They have piloted a new curricular structure that allow young people to specialise in discrete subject areas at the end of S1. These arrangements need kept under review to ensure that young people receive their full entitlement to a broad general education. Senior leaders recognise the need to expand the number and range of courses on offer to young people from S4 to S6. There are notable improvements in the school's performance in National Qualifications, particularly in S4 More young people are now leaving with better literacy and numeracy qualifications. Senior leaders and faculty leaders recognise where further improvements in attainment are required and have strategies in place to address this. Senior leaders have also established, and continue to refine, their system for monitoring and tracking young people's progress from S1 to S3.

What happens next?

The school has made significant progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Falkirk Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Guch Dhillon
HM Inspector