25 February 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

Lasswade High School Centre
Midlothian Council

In January 2013, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child’s school. 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 how the school has continued to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection and at aspects of the school’s work, as proposed by the headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out how well young people are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

Young people are proud of, and enjoy working with, many new resources in a new school building which offers them an improved environment for learning. They are positive about the changes and improvements that have been made to their learning since the inspection. These include improved access to information and communications technology (ICT) and better approaches to working cooperatively with each other during lessons. Young people appreciate the support provided by their teachers and feel that they are encouraged to do their best. They are benefiting from improved opportunities to discuss their learning. For example, they can participate in one of the three new pupil forums, in a focus group with senior staff or with mentors who provide support. Staff need to continue developing helpful feedback to young people about their work so that they know what they need to do to improve and how they are going to achieve this. The school has plans to review approaches to promoting positive behaviour to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the school to managing behaviour in and around classes.

The school is continuing to improve its approaches to recognising young people’s broader achievements. As a result, more young people are now receiving formal accreditation for their achievements in award schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award and the Saltire Award. There is scope to extend this to an even greater number of young people at all stages. The school has introduced a new system for monitoring young people’s progress in their learning across all subjects, including that of young people from S1 to S3. It recognises that this requires further development. At S4, the attainment of young people in examinations has improved in a few key measures. This includes the proportion of young people achieving five or more Credit awards at Standard Grade. The school needs to improve the...
attainment of young people at S5/S6 in a few key measures. It recognises that in a few subjects, particularly in English and mathematics, too many young people do not achieve an award after being presented for examinations at Higher level. It is taking positive steps to address this. The number of young people moving on to a positive destination such as employment, training, further or higher education when they leave school continues to improve.

**How well does the school support young people to develop and learn?**

Support staff, led effectively by one of the depute headteachers, continue to provide strong support for young people who require additional help with their learning. Recent improvements to meet young people’s learning needs have included an improvement in the quality of young people’s learning targets in support plans. Those with support plans are now more engaged in the setting and reviewing of their learning targets. This is helping them understand better how they can improve their work. The guidance and support provided by pastoral care teachers in particular is valued by young people. Staff across the school need to continue to develop the work that has been done to ensure that all young people are sufficiently well supported and challenged in their learning.

In consultation with young people, staff and parents, the school is continuing to review the curriculum to make improvements in line with Curriculum for Excellence. It has reviewed current arrangements and recognises that revised plans must ensure that all young people from S1 to S3 experience a broad general education. There is still work to be done to ensure that all staff plan consistently for the development of young people’s literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The school has introduced some innovative contexts for young people to link their learning, for example, the promising ‘Crown Estates’ project. Staff are working very hard in developing new courses for young people from S4 to S6 to meet the demands of the new National Qualifications. As the school develops curriculum arrangements for S1 to S6, it still has decisions to make about how it will ensure that young people receive their full entitlements. For example, how young people at S5/S6 will experience their entitlement to a progressive experience of religious, moral and philosophical education. Staff and young people continue to develop their use of ICT to enhance learning. The school has recently purchased hand-held tablets for all young people at S3 and staff in a promising project to enhance learning across the school.

**How well does the school improve the quality of its work?**

The school has been through considerable change since the last inspection. This includes a move to a new building and the appointment of a significant number of new staff. A new headteacher, appointed in August 2013, has provided clear leadership. In his short time in post he has already gained the confidence of young people, staff and parents. He has led a number of necessary improvements. For example, after consulting widely, the school has recently agreed on a new vision and set of values which will provide a focus for its work. Across the school, there is now a clearer sense of direction and a shared vision for improvement. There is a need to continue to improve communication across the school. The school’s approaches to self-evaluation and planning for improvement are now better. The senior leadership
team (SLT), committed to improving the school, has worked hard to develop more positive relationships and improve teamwork. These aspects of the work of the SLT are improving but require continued development. Leadership is now shared more effectively across the school. All staff participate in at least one of a number of school improvement groups and many contribute to school life widely by organising activities and trips. Learning visits are now helping staff to share good practice better and are soon to be extended across departments. The Parent Council has significantly extended its membership and it is more involved with school improvement.

What happens next?

The school has successfully made improvements in its approaches to self-evaluation. Leadership across the school is improving. Under the leadership of the new headteacher, we are confident that the school has the capacity for further improvement. Education Scotland’s Area Lead Officer will discuss with Midlothian Council how best to provide further support for the school and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We shall ask Midlothian Council, working with the school, to provide us with a progress report within one year and decide at that point whether a further inspection is required.

Marie McAdam
HM Inspector

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