

16 January 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

In October/November 2017, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Balwearie High School. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- The positive start the new headteacher has made in securing staff support and commitment to improvement. He has achieved this through promoting a deeper understanding of the context of the school community and the needs of all young people.
- The variety of new opportunities for staff and young people to develop their leadership skills.
- The positive relationships developed by staff which contribute to a learning environment in which young people are co-operative and keen to learn.
- The high proportions of young people who leave the Department of Additional Support Needs (DAS) and move on to a positive destination such as a college placement.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from Fife Council.

- Identify key improvement priorities and maintain a strategic overview of the pace of change to ensure that it is manageable and sustainable.
- As planned, develop a shared understanding across the school of what high-quality learning, teaching and assessment look like and ensure that these high standards are applied consistently. Continue to develop the promising approaches to monitoring and tracking young people's progress introduced by the new headteacher. A focus is needed, particularly from S1 to S3, to ensure all young people make appropriate progress.
- As planned, review the S1 to S3 curriculum to ensure that young people benefit from receiving their entitlement to a broad general education.
- Review practices and procedures to ensure the wellbeing and development of all young people. This would enable them all to feel safe and cared for. Strengthening 'pupil voice' across the school would be one approach to contributing to young people's wellbeing.
- As identified by the new headteacher, the school should continue to develop strategies to raise attainment, particularly for the lowest-attaining groups of young people across all stages.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate some quality indicators from [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of quality indicators to keep track of how well Scottish schools are doing.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Balwearie High School

Quality indicators	Evaluation
Leadership of change	satisfactory
Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
Raising attainment and achievement	satisfactory
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	weak
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from How good is our school? (4th edition) , Appendix 3: The six-point scale .	

A more detailed document called summarised inspection findings will be available on the Education Scotland website at <https://education.gov.scot/inspection-reports/fife/5406838>

What happens next?

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the school needs time and additional support from Fife Council to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will liaise with Fife Council to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within a year of the publication of this letter. We will discuss the details of this inspection with Fife Council. When we return to inspect the school, we will write to you as parents/carers informing you of the progress the school has made.

Marie McAdam
HM Inspector