

19 December 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

Peterhead Academy, Aberdeenshire Council

In May 2016, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeenshire 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. 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.

Continue to work at improving the school's ethos, building on the recently established vision and values

- There is now an improved ethos in Peterhead Academy. The values of positivity, aspiration, perseverance, equality, responsibility and success are now more embedded in the daily life and work of the school. Staff and young people have worked well together to develop and implement a useful range of policies related to ethos and behaviour. These efforts are contributing to a range of improvements in the school. Prefects play an important role in supporting good behaviour in the school corridors. The Young Health Leaders are promoting a culture where everyone is included in the life and work of the school.

Continue to improve learning and teaching in order to raise attainment

- There has been improvement in the quality of learning and teaching. Staff across the school have worked well together to develop a shared understanding of features of effective practice. They see this work as key to engaging young people more in their learning and encouraging improvements in behaviour and attitudes to learning. There is now a culture where more teachers are ready to try out new approaches in their classrooms to improve the learning experience for young people.
- Faculty heads have taken a lead role in driving forward improvements to learning and teaching within and across faculty areas. They now meet regularly as a group to discuss and take forward ideas to further improve the work of the school. In areas such as differentiation, questioning, literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing they share ideas and plan school wide approaches. Class teachers are taking on leadership roles to bring about school improvement. The school needs to continue with plans to improve the consistency of the quality of learning and teaching across the school. This needs to include promoting opportunities within

lessons for young people to become actively involved in taking ownership of their learning. Regular opportunities to talk with their teachers about their progress towards agreed targets will further support raising young people's attainment.

- The school has focussed on improving learning and teaching to raise the attainment of young people in Peterhead Academy. The percentage of young people attaining well in S4 continues to improve. However, the attainment of young people in S5 is not yet showing sustained improvement. Although the percentage of young people leaving school at the end of S4 and going directly into employment continues to be higher than the national and local authority figures, almost all leavers move into a positive destination, including those leaving at the end of S4.

Improve the use of assessment to monitor and improve young people's progress across their learning

- The school now has in place a system for tracking the progress of young people in their learning across S1 to S3. Teachers are continuing to work together to increase the reliability of the assessment information. They are beginning to use the National Benchmarks to inform their judgements about learner progress. They are working to build a language of progression which can be used across the school. This should support a shared understanding across staff, young people and parents when discussing the progress of young people.

Continue to develop literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing skills across all areas of the curriculum

- Attainment in literacy and numeracy continues to improve at S4. However, the school is still at the early stages of sharing expected standards in literacy and numeracy across the school. The pace of this improvement work needs increased so that teachers across the school can support young people to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Positive progress has been made to raising awareness and understanding of wellbeing with young people. Posters displayed across the school promote approaches to wellbeing which underpin young people's ability to learn and achieve. Opportunities for young people to lead activities on current issues around health and wellbeing have increased, especially for young people in S1 to S3. The school should continue with this important work as a key aspect of improving outcomes for all young people in Peterhead Academy.

What happens next?

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

Carol McDonald
HM Inspector

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