

21 January 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In April 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Campbeltown Grammar School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Argyll and Bute 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, staff and other partners about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection, and included the work of the Learning Centre. 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.

**Take the opportunity provided by the move to the new building to revise the school vision, values and aims, involving young people, parents and staff, to provide the school and its partners with a clear sense of direction.**

The school has refreshed its vision, values and aims and has taken some early steps towards involving young people, parents, staff and partner agencies more purposefully. As yet, the school has achieved only limited success in developing a clear sense of direction. Events, since the original inspection, have made the school's efforts to improve more challenging. As a result, limited progress has been achieved. The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the local authority with the appointment of an additional deputy headteacher, now providing the potential capacity from which the school can start to drive improvements.

**Improve the quality and consistency of the school's approaches to self-evaluation, informed by rigorous use of data and effective planning to improve outcomes for young people.**

The school is at an early stage in developing appropriate ways for all stakeholders to take part in evaluating its strengths and areas for improvement. The local authority's calendar of evaluative activities, now introduced into the school, is supporting a better organised approach. Some teachers are exploring ways of taking feedback from young people, and are beginning to make more use of attainment data to support self-evaluation. Major inconsistencies remain in teachers' practice. Senior leaders should provide a more purposeful vision of how the school judges its own performance, in driving further improvements.

**Develop strategic leadership across the school in order to identify key improvement priorities. Senior leaders should maintain an overview of the pace of change to ensure that it is manageable and sustainable. Planning over the mid- and short-term should focus on a small number of priorities.**

Some improvements in strategic leadership have helped some staff to feel more included and involved. Senior leaders have begun to develop a positive working relationship, as a team and with some staff which helps them take forward school improvement. Staff now have a

clearer understanding of the priorities in improving young people's learning successes and achievements. Senior leaders should improve communication with all principal teachers, to help them recognise the importance of their role, and to raise expectations of the consistency of their contributions. The priorities which staff are asked to focus on should be more carefully judged, paced and limited in number. Developments need to be seen through to conclusion. Senior leaders acknowledge that strategic leadership has to improve further, to enable the school to achieve its full potential in delivering improvements for young people.

**Develop further, as a matter of urgency, a curriculum which is relevant to the school's context, meets the needs of all learners and provides appropriate pathways and qualifications for all young people. This should include improving learning and teaching across the school to ensure an appropriate level of pace and challenge.**

Staff continue to make improvements to the curriculum in the broad general education (BGE) from S1 to S3. The school has increased the range of learner pathways and qualifications that young people can choose in the senior phase. Young people in S4 to S6 can now take six courses instead of five. Young people can choose from a range of Skills for Work programmes, and Foundation Apprenticeships provided by Argyll College and the Argyll and Bute Learning and Development Team, but uptake has been limited. Young people now have more opportunities for achievements beyond the classroom. These opportunities include taking on roles as sports leaders and volunteering in the local community. Young people benefit from valuable work placements in a range of settings. These include the commendable development, strongly supported by one of the school's partners, of the idea of internship with local business. Several partners would welcome the opportunity to work more closely with the school in planning, delivering and evaluating the curriculum. Staff in the English department have provided a strong lead in delivering literacy across the curriculum. The school should now take a strategic approach to developing numeracy and health and wellbeing across the curriculum.

Staff have introduced some improvements in the quality of learning and teaching since the original inspection. Most young people are better motivated and engaged in their learning. Almost all teachers provide clear instructions and explanations, and the majority use questioning well. Staff have been developing approaches which involve young people more actively in their learning. However, lessons do not yet consistently demonstrate the characteristics described in the school's Learning and Teaching statement. For example, young people do not consistently experience appropriate pace or challenge in their learning.

**Set a strategic direction to lead developments and maintain an overview of young people's wellbeing at Campbeltown Grammar School. This should include the development and implementation of approaches to wellbeing which support young people having a shared understanding of their own progress in wellbeing.**

The school does not yet demonstrate a clear strategic direction to promote young people's wellbeing and young people do not yet have a shared understanding of their own progress. The Health and Wellbeing Partnership group met once only, in November 2018, and has yet to make the important contribution of which it is capable. The school has recently adopted the local authority's 'wellbeing app' which is focused on young people's progress in the national wellbeing indicators. The school needs to clarify the relationship between the new period of personal support each week, and that timetabled for Personal Social and Health Education

(PSHE). The PSHE and Healthy Me programmes include topics which respond well to issues in the school and the wider community, and are well supported by partner agencies. A few stakeholders express significant concerns about poor behaviour in the school, with no apparent formal, agreed procedure for dealing with behavioural issues. Overall, parents and other stakeholders feel that communication is not currently a strength of the school. A few have particular concerns about the lack of response when they contact the school with a query about their child's wellbeing. Some aspects of school life are having a negative impact on the wellbeing and sense of fairness of staff and young people. All staff must model professional behaviour in respect of timekeeping, use of mobile phones and the manner of their conversations with colleagues and young people.

The Learning Support Department is particularly well appointed and situated. Young people enjoy attending, and staff know them and their needs well. Support for learning staff are beginning to use the new facilities to encourage young people to develop new skills and to gain accreditation for important achievements. The school should review its approach to referrals to the Learning Centre as there is currently no formal referral system. Overall, support for learning staff feel that their department is now more included in the work of the school. There is significant potential for support for learning teachers to have a greater impact on outcomes for learners, by being more involved across the school through consultation, curriculum development and cooperative teaching.

**Improve attainment. Develop approaches to assessment, including the monitoring and tracking of young people's progress, to ensure there is timely reliable data on the attainment of every learner.**

Many of the steps being taken to improve attainment in the school have had too little time to demonstrate their impact. Some positive evidence of attainment improving in Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy exists, but young people's weak performance in numeracy remains a concern. In the senior phase, the school has no evidence of any substantial pattern of improvement in attainment since the original inspection. Over the period 2017/18 to 2018/19, young people in S4, S5 and S6 performed less well, in a narrower range of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) courses, than similar young people across Scotland. Attainment across the different areas of the curriculum remains too variable. Whilst a number of curriculum areas demonstrate levels of attainment with some positive features, others do not. Targeting improvements in these areas will require investment of time and resource, from senior managers and from the local authority, in coaching and developing staff. Almost all school leavers progress to positive destinations on leaving school.

### What happens next?

The school has made insufficient progress against the points for action since the original inspection. We will liaise with Argyll and Bute Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within one year of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Argyll and Bute Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Bill Geddes  
HM Inspector