

29 April 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In January 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Peebles High School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Scottish Borders 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.

Senior leaders and staff need to improve the planning of learning, teaching and assessment in the broad general education (BGE). They need to develop approaches to ensure that all young people make appropriate progress in their learning.

Staff have improved the planning of learning, teaching and assessment in the BGE. Staff use the Peebles High School Learning and Teaching Framework effectively which is leading to greater consistency in the quality of learning and teaching. Teachers work well together to improve their planning of assessments. Teachers measure more rigorously the progress that young people are making. As a result, teachers are improving the reliability of their assessment data. Young people experience a wider range of assessment methods which help inform their next steps in learning. Most young people experience appropriate pace and challenge in their learning. They also benefit from more effective feedback which helps most young people to understand better how to improve. Senior leaders should continue to develop teachers' practice to ensure all young people experience high-quality learning and teaching across the school.

Senior leaders have successfully developed and implemented a school wide system for checking young people's progress in the BGE. They have a clearer understanding of young people's attainment as they progress from S1 to S3. Staff use this information effectively to identify gaps in young people's attainment. Senior leaders and staff need to develop further their understanding of attainment gaps for different groups of young people. They need to use this information consistently to ensure all young people make the best progress through the BGE.

Staff should develop a clear understanding of how to identify and respond to all young people's individual learning needs.

Senior leaders have made significant progress in how they identify and address young people's individual learning needs. Senior leaders and staff have undertaken a range of impactful professional learning and use this to help them address young people's additional support needs more effectively.

Teachers use feedback from young people and parents to target improvements within this area. This includes, for example, a successful focus on improving how they support young people with dyslexia. Young people who require support to fully engage in school are

supported through the Connect Inclusion Support Service as well as sensitive support from the pastoral team, including the skilful and caring pastoral support assistants. Senior leaders and staff who lead in this area have developed effective approaches to check how well young people are being supported.

Senior leaders, staff, young people and the Parent Council are reviewing the curriculum offer to support more young people to follow pathways suited to their needs and interests. This includes an improved course choice process, supported well by pastoral staff. Senior leaders and faculty leads are widening their use of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and are increasing the offer for young people. They should continue with plans to develop this work to ensure that all young people follow the most aspirational pathways.

The strategic leadership of the school requires improvement. Senior leaders should monitor and evaluate the work of the school more effectively to identify priorities for improvement. They then need to evaluate how well these priorities are making a difference to improving outcomes for young people. This is especially important for the safeguarding of and raising the attainment and achievement of all learners.

The headteacher, appointed on an interim basis, is highly regarded across the school community. He is supported well by staff and is successfully identifying improvement priorities and leading change. Staff, young people and parents feel that senior leaders are approachable, visible and ambitious for improving the school.

Most of the school community feel that the culture, morale and ethos have improved significantly. The headteacher is successfully building a culture where staff feel valued, trusted and empowered. The majority of the school community agree that communication has improved significantly over the past school session. Staff, parents and young people feel better informed of whole school matters. Parents would welcome clearer information on their child's individual progress.

The headteacher is building the capacity of leadership at all levels across the school. A greater number of staff are leading change effectively. An increasing number of young people are leading initiatives through peer support and the pupil parliament. Middle leaders are improving learning and teaching across their faculty areas. The Parent Council has a greater role in school improvement and is helping to shape the development of new policies to enhance learners' experiences and outcomes.

Senior leaders and staff have developed more effective systems and processes to raise the attainment and achievement of young people. They need to continue to develop their use of data to identify all gaps in young people's learning. This includes understanding how issues such as attendance or socio-economic disadvantage are impacting adversely on the attainment of groups of young people. Staff have developed tracking and monitoring processes for those who may be affected by barriers to learning, including those impacted by deprivation.

Senior leaders have focused on improving successfully the attainment of young people in S4. There are aspects of young people's attainment in S5 and S6 which are not improving. Senior leaders now need to focus on improving the attainment of the current S6 group to

maximise their attainment on leaving school. Senior leaders should continue to work with staff to improve the attendance of different groups of young people.

Young people now achieve through a greater range of courses beyond National Qualifications. Young people are engaging in more courses or supervised study time. Senior leaders have increased young people's involvement in service, volunteering and leadership activities in S6. Young people are now gaining increased accreditation and a greater understanding of the range of skills they are developing.

Young people participate in a wide variety of school clubs, leadership groups, pupil parliament and volunteering opportunities. They are developing valuable leadership, communication and teamwork skills. Staff now track young people's participation in achievement opportunities and are using this information well to improve engagement and reduce barriers to participation. Young people are beginning to reflect on their development of meta-skills related to their participation in activities.

Senior leaders have devised a range of effective systems to ensure safeguarding and child protection procedures are enacted appropriately.

Senior leaders have implemented a range of successful approaches to monitor and evaluate the work of the school more effectively. They are using this information well to identify ongoing improvement actions. In managing the pace of change, senior leaders should ensure that practices introduced, and improvements made, are firmly embedded so that they are sustainable. As leadership continues to improve across the school, the school is well placed to continue its improvement journey.

What happens next?

The school has made good 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. Scottish Borders Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Patricia Cameron
HM Inspector