

13 June 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**West Calder High School  
West Lothian 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 West Lothian 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. 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.

**Improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching across the school.**

Overall, the acting headteacher is providing effective leadership of learning. She has established a clear sense of direction and purpose for the school. The work being done to take forward teaching and learning is resulting in young people being more actively engaged in their tasks, exercising choice, and working collaboratively with peers. They are clearer about what they are learning. Teachers now need to ensure that they know if young people have been successful in their learning. Young people are benefiting from increasing opportunities to take on greater responsibility for their own learning. The school should continue to share this practice more widely. The use of digital technology is significantly contributing to the motivation and engagement of young people. The 'Inspired Learning Space' is providing young people with more creative approaches to learning. While there have been improvements in young people's learning experiences across the school, there is still scope for these to be of a more consistently high quality across the school. Young people in S4-S6 are clearer about their strengths and areas for improvement, and are able to set more meaningful targets for their learning. This now needs to be extended to young people in S1-S3. Overall, relationships across the school between young people and staff are positive and most young people respond well to teachers' guidance and instructions. There has been a marked improvement in the behaviour of young people. Young people are appreciative of the commitment and willingness demonstrated by staff in offering additional learning opportunities, for example through supported study. This has been very well received by young people. There are more effective approaches being deployed in departments to

gather the views of young people on the quality of their learning. As a result, young people feel listened to and valued.

**Continue to improve the curriculum, in particular young people's experiences from S1 to S3.**

The headteacher has worked effectively alongside staff, parents and young people to develop a clear vision for the school captured by the slogan 'working together to bring out the best in you'. The S1 to S3 curriculum now ensures that all young people maintain a suitable breadth of learning. This includes opportunities for young people to make connections across their learning and to take part in the wider life of the school. Teachers have extended the range of courses and programmes to cater more effectively for young people's needs and interests from S1 to S3. Changes to the curriculum and providing young people with choices at the end of S3 should ensure that they make a smoother transition into S4-S6. It is too early to evidence the impact of these changes on improving the attainment of young people. There is more work to be done to ensure that young people have opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across the school. The school has built effectively on its strong community links in taking forward important issues such as Developing the Young Workforce agenda. The school should continue to refine its system for monitoring and tracking young people's progress from S1 to S3 to help sustain improvements in attainment. Senior leaders also recognise the need to have a clear overview of young people's progress from S1 through to S3 across all curricular areas.

**Improve approaches to meeting the learning needs of all young people, in particular those with social, emotional and behavioural needs.**

Teachers are better meeting the learning needs of young people in classes by providing more suitable tasks, activities and resources. Improvements are still required in a minority of classes where activities are not always sufficiently challenging and the pace of progress not always appropriate. The learning needs of young people continue to be identified well on entry to S1, helped by close working with associated primary schools and partner agencies. Class teachers receive useful information and advice to support young people requiring additional support but now need to act on it to better support learners. The school has reviewed the way learning support teachers and class teachers work together to provide more effective help for young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs (SEBN). Young people with SEBN now feel more included and part of the school, with fewer instances of them being extracted from class. As a result of more effective strategic leadership, there are improved approaches to meeting the needs of young people with SEBN through the provision of 'targeted support hubs'. It will be important to ensure that these hubs provide a coherent experience for young people by aligning the work they do so that young people can return to class without having gaps in their learning. Senior leaders recognise the need to review approaches to meeting the needs of young people to ensure that they have frequent opportunities to discuss their learning, progress and needs with an adult that knows them well.

## **What happens next?**

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with West Lothian Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection within 18 months of publication of this letter. We will discuss with West Lothian 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.

Guch Dhillon  
HM Inspector

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If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0131 244 4330, or e-mail: [complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk) or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.