

30 August 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Auchmuty High School
Fife Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well young people are learning and achieving and how well the school supports young people to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including partnerships to extend curriculum choice, the promotion of gender balanced learning and the work in place to build a strong school community. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving young people's education.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

Young people are welcoming, friendly and proud of their school. They enjoy learning in their new school building and want to do well. In the majority of classes young people experience well-paced and challenging lessons. There is a positive ethos and a good work ethic amongst young people in most classes. Across the school, young people have opportunities to share feedback on their learning experiences and analyse and evaluate their classwork. In a minority of classes, learning is often too passive and young people need to be challenged more through increased pace, more depth and through leading their own learning. Most young people reported that they feel treated fairly and with respect by staff and other pupils. The behaviour of most learners was good. Further work needs to be done to ensure that every learner understands the importance of good classroom behaviour to allow a positive climate for learning. Young people benefit from a rich variety of clubs and study support sessions at lunchtime and after school. They participate in a good range of initiatives with external partners and visiting speakers to extend their learning in varied contexts. For example, young people learn about life and work in engineering through a college partnership that includes learning in a business environment. In physics, learners studied energy demands while working in a local company. They have participated in creative approaches to explore gender identity and equality. Staff understand the need to give young people a stronger voice in the school with more opportunities for leadership, especially for younger pupils. There is some commendable work using digital learning, for example, in music technology. Further work should be done to increase all young people's experiences using imaginative and well planned digital learning across the school.

Young people are achieving a broad range of skills for life and work. Increasing numbers of young people are engaging actively and demonstrating achievement through sports events, cultural performances and art exhibitions. Up to forty young people from S5 and S6, who are undertaking Sports Leader Awards, provide positive role models and promote healthy lifestyles for younger children, for example, through coaching. The numbers of recognised youth awards gained by young people through partnership with community learning development partners has risen over the last few years from a low base. There is an increasing number of young people undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at bronze and silver level. In the Department for Additional Support (DAS), young people are developing a wide range of skills such as linking cooking in the life skills flat to the importance of recycling. Achieving these varied skills helps young people prepare well for the world of work. Young people across the school are eager to get involved and make a difference to the lives of others. Senior pupils lead the charities committee. They decide the local, national and international charities to be supported such as Water Aid and Alzheimer's UK, and co-ordinate much of the fundraising activities. Young people demonstrate care and concern for others through, for example, their roles as school befrienders or through modelling a reassuring presence for younger pupils across the school. They gain skills in performance through their involvement in various music and drama groups and from high quality public performances such as the well organised school show, the local 'tea dance' and the various choir performances. The school understands the need to develop further its tracking of all young people's achievements to ensure they all benefit from a broad and varied education.

From S1 to S3, young people are making positive progress across curriculum areas and in literacy and numeracy. Overall from S4 to S6, attainment continues to improve over the last five years. Young people are making good progress in National Qualifications with improvement demonstrated in a number of areas including literacy, German, business management and music. Almost all young people, including those with additional needs, show success in moving on to a positive destination such as higher or further education on leaving school. Staff should continue to develop further the school's tracking system to improve young people's understanding of how well they are achieving success and the targets they should set.

How well does the school support young people to develop and learn?

In the majority of lessons, teachers set tasks and activities at the right level. In the best lessons, young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and are given feedback including their next steps for learning. For example in English, and in Art and Design, lessons are well planned with appropriate opportunities for active learning and challenging activities. Staff know the young people very well and many have a sound understanding of their needs. They are highly committed to the young people and there is a strong pastoral care ethos across the school. Positive and caring relationships between young people and teachers are a significant feature of nearly all classes. Young people report that they are safe and cared for in school, and the school recognises the importance of reviewing practice continually in this important area. Pupil support assistants play a strong role in supporting young people to improve and achieve. In a few lessons, teachers did not provide the right level of support and challenge for young people. Staff recognise that greater consistency of practice is required across the school. To achieve this, all staff need to review their

planning systems to involve young people more in establishing clear, relevant and measurable targets to monitor progress and achievement. The school has developed strong links with partner agencies such as psychological services and a variety of other health professionals who help provide young people and their families with the right help at the right time. Staff across the school have worked hard and effectively to increase attendance rates and reduce the levels of young people being excluded from school.

The school's curriculum is based on an ambition for young people to achieve their full potential in a safe, secure and nurturing environment. Staff aim to provide relevant experiences for young people, including a wide range of clubs, to ensure they are equipped for life and work beyond school. There is an increasing focus on employability skills and opportunities for partnership work leading to wider accreditation. The curriculum has a number of areas where further developments are required. Building on the very good work already undertaken in literacy, the school now needs to ensure a more coherent and consistent approach to develop young people's skills further. From S1 to S3, young people have opportunities to learn through a broad range of subjects and a range of opportunities for personal achievement. We have asked the school to develop further the broad general education, ensuring that all young people, including those in the DAS, are developing their skills progressively in S1 to S3 without the need to prepare directly for national qualifications. This will include opportunities for learning across subjects to enable young people to deepen the skills they are developing in new contexts. Though numeracy standards are improving, staff recognise the need to revise the school's approach to promoting and developing young people's numeracy skills further across the curriculum. There is also a need to have a clear, focused strategy for the development of health and wellbeing which is well understood by all staff and informed by local information about the health needs of all young people. A wide range of partners contribute to and extend the curriculum. Working with nearby companies enables young people to develop their understanding of project management and this is increasing learner awareness of options about possible future pathways and the range of skills they require to be successful in their chosen career. The school now needs to formalise curriculum arrangements further with these partners to ensure that their contribution is maximised.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher has brought about important improvements during his time in charge. He has provided stability and confidence to the school community during a period of ongoing change, including moving to the new school building. He is well-respected by staff, parents, young people and school partners as a reflective leader who continues to bring creative ideas and a vision to drive change and improvement for the school. Senior managers are approachable and work well together. The Faculty Head team demonstrate effective leadership of learning and along with other staff, contribute much to school improvement. Spreading the opportunities for leadership is a strong feature of the school. Senior leaders place significant professional trust in staff at all levels, which greatly enhances team work and the ethos of the school. Young people demonstrate leadership capabilities well in classes and in their chosen clubs and activities both in and beyond school. As they move up through the school learners respond well to the increasing opportunities for formal leadership roles as prefects and

house captains. Staff understand the need to ensure that identified areas for development, noted from reviewing the work of the school, are followed through to ensure continued improvement. Self-evaluation should be focussed further on ensuring consistently high-quality learning and teaching across the school. There is also a need to review and improve the strategic leadership of safeguarding. Staff should build further on the good practice which exists in the school to ensure everyone takes good account of pupil views on aspects which require improvement. Senior managers understand the need to support parents and other partners to play a bigger part in school improvement. Overall, Auchmuty High is a good school with capacity for continued improvement.

This inspection found the following key strengths:

- Welcoming, friendly, young people who are proud of their school.
- The head teacher's leadership to improve outcomes for young people.
- The use made of the well-designed school building to promote a very positive environment for learning.
- The increased opportunities for achievement provided by staff and partners.

We discussed with staff and Fife Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Ensure self-evaluation leads to high-quality learning and teaching consistently and raised attainment for all.
- Develop the curriculum further to reflect fully Curriculum for Excellence.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Fife Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Aileen Monaghan
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/AuchmutyHighSchoolFife.asp>

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