

# Mearns Castle High School

## Standards and Quality Report

### Session 2014-2015

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#### Key purposes:

- to report on our progress in implementing the priorities listed in the School Improvement Plan 2014-2015
- to indicate the progress made in meeting agreed targets in appropriate areas
- to provide an evaluative summary of the quality of the work across a range of areas in the school
- to highlight strengths and identify priorities for next year

#### Background Information:

Mearns Castle High School is a large non-denominational secondary school in Newton Mearns in East Renfrewshire. The Mearns Castle cluster consists of one partner Nursery School, Hazeldene Nursery and four partner Primary Schools:- Mearns (shared with Eastwood High School), Kirkhill, Eaglesham and Calderwood Lodge. The latter is a Jewish Primary school located in the Newlands area of Glasgow but linked to Mearns Castle,

Our school roll is currently 1250 and with a staying on rate of well over 90% we maintain high numbers in our senior school.

The school is fully staffed with 109 teachers and 32 support staff. We also benefit from a dynamic Parent Council which takes an active interest in promoting and supporting the school. Together we work in partnership with staff from a range of Partner agencies to ensure the highest quality educational experience for our pupils.

Our school has an excellent reputation for high levels of academic attainment as well as very successful wider achievement. We pride ourselves on providing an inclusive education for all of our pupils and we are committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve their full potential. We work hard as a school community to successfully deliver our shared vision for our school.

Based on our extensive self-evaluation questionnaire results 98% of our Pupils, Staff and Parents agree that 'Overall I am happy with Mearns Castle High School.'

In April 2011 following an Inspection of the school HMIE stated in its report '*Mearns Castle High School is a highly achieving school community with a clear sense of direction. There is a strong sense of ownership of the school amongst staff and young people. Young people are very well served by this school. As a result of the excellent quality of education provided by the school we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection.*'

All self-evaluation evidence suggests that this judgement continues to be valid today.

## **Mearns Castle High School Servitium**

### **Our Vision**

The Mearns Castle High School community will work together to sustain a safe, inclusive and high quality learning environment that enables us to develop fully our capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society.

**Our Vision, based on our Values, will be realised through the achievement of Our Aims**

### **Our Values**

- Respect:** show self-respect and be considerate of the needs, wishes and feelings of others.
- Inclusion:** treat all people fairly and enable them to feel included.
- Integrity:** be honest and sincere.
- Responsibility:** be accountable for your actions and make a positive contribution to society.
- Ambition:** show a pride in your school and have high expectations of what you can achieve.
- Achievement:** be enthusiastic and show a determination to succeed in all you do.

### **Our Aims**

We will be motivated and enthusiastic in our learning and teaching and determined to reach the highest standards of attainment and achievement.

We will be confident and ambitious, build positive relationships and pursue a healthy and active lifestyle.

We will show initiative and be enterprising, creative and responsible citizens.

We will show respect for others, care for our environment and make a positive contribution to society.

## Our Main Priorities for 2014-2015

- Continue to raise attainment for all pupils, including improving our use of Insight as a tool for self-evaluation
- Continue to improve our strategies for Providing Opportunities for All for our vulnerable learners by ensuring flexible achievement pathways to meet the needs of all pupils
- Working with our Cluster Partners to continue to develop our curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence
- Continue to improve our arrangements for the delivery and impact of Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing Responsibilities for All
- Successfully participate in the implementation of the Education Department's 1+2 Languages policy
- Develop high quality courses and assessments for the new National Qualifications Levels 1-7
- Continue to improve the quality of Learning and Teaching including implementing the use of Wifi/BYOD
- Develop further our arrangements for raising attainment and recognising achievement
- Develop further our arrangements for the Care, Welfare and Development of our pupils by implementing the ERC GIRFEC Framework
- Establish a culture of self-evaluation that is focussed on improving Learning and Teaching
- Develop an improved Home Study policy
- Audit our Health and Wellbeing arrangements leading to the development of a whole school Health and Wellbeing strategy
- Fully implement the GTCS Professional Update PRD procedures
- Implement a new online booking system for Parents' Meetings
- Continue to improve our arrangements for ensuring that the 'Pupil Voice' makes an effective and important contribution to the improvement of the school

As will be demonstrated through the details of this Report we successfully achieved our Targets for session 2014-2015

## Methods of Gathering Evidence:

The evaluative judgements made throughout the Report are based on evidence gathered from the following sources:

- Systematic analysis of SQA, Curriculum for Excellence and Standardised Test attainment data at both school and Cluster level
- Systematic analysis of other key performance data e.g. finance, attendance, exclusion, SLDR
- Systematic evaluation of performance against Local Authority targets
- Regular meetings of School Teams at all levels including SLT, ELT, Faculty and Departmental Teams and School Improvement Teams including meeting minutes
- SLT link arrangements with Faculties/Departments
- Regular meetings between Head Teacher and Teachers' Representatives
- Systematic reviews of School and Faculty/Department Improvement Plans
- Systematic use of HGIOS 3 and Journey to Excellence self-evaluation documentation

- Extensive programme of Whole School and Faculty/Department lesson observations based on HGIOS 3 QIs
- Informal and formal consultation with staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders
- Staff involvement in PRD programme
- Regular consultation with Parent Council
- Regular meetings between Head Teacher and School Support Leaders
- Faculty/Department Standard and Quality Reports 2014-2015

## Section 1

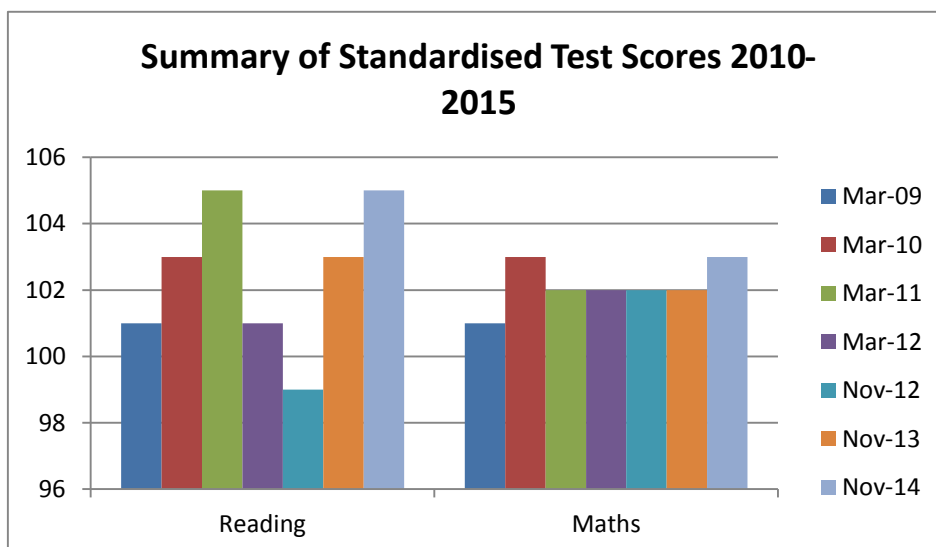
### How good are we at raising the attainment and achievement of our pupils? (How Good is Our School QI 1.1)

#### Raising Attainment

As a result of the effective implementation of our Improvement Plan 2014-2015, as can be seen from the data in the graphs below, we continue to successfully raise the attainment of our pupils as measured by their performance in Education Department Standardised Tests and the 2015 SQA examinations. In some categories the results are the best the school has produced to date. Our performance continues to be at least 'very good' and in some instances 'excellent' in this area.

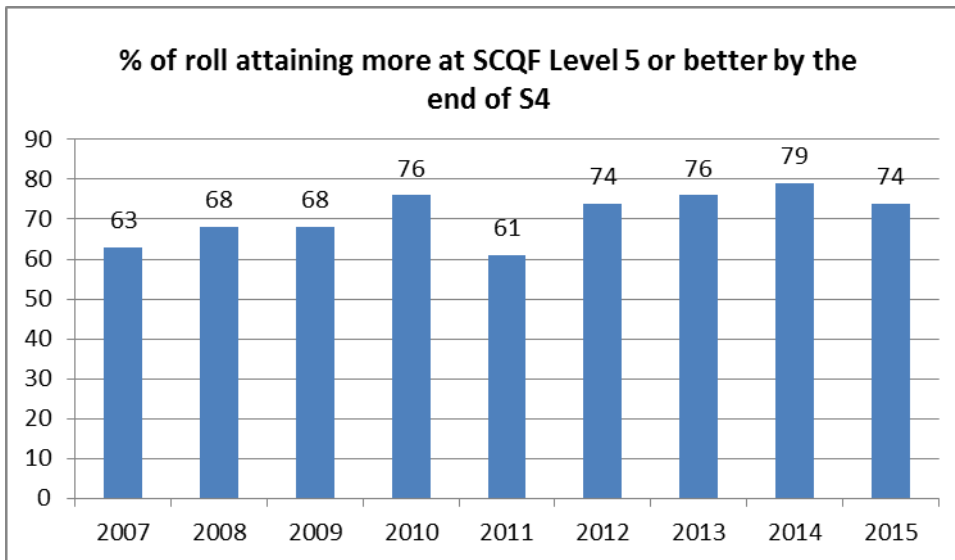
As can be seen from Graph 1, our pupils consistently perform above the Local Authority average of 100 in S2 Standardised Test scores for Reading and Maths. Pupils' average score for Reading in 2015 rose again in line with a previously improving trend since 2009. The pupils' average score for Maths has remained consistently high in recent years and increased further in 2015.

**Graph 1**



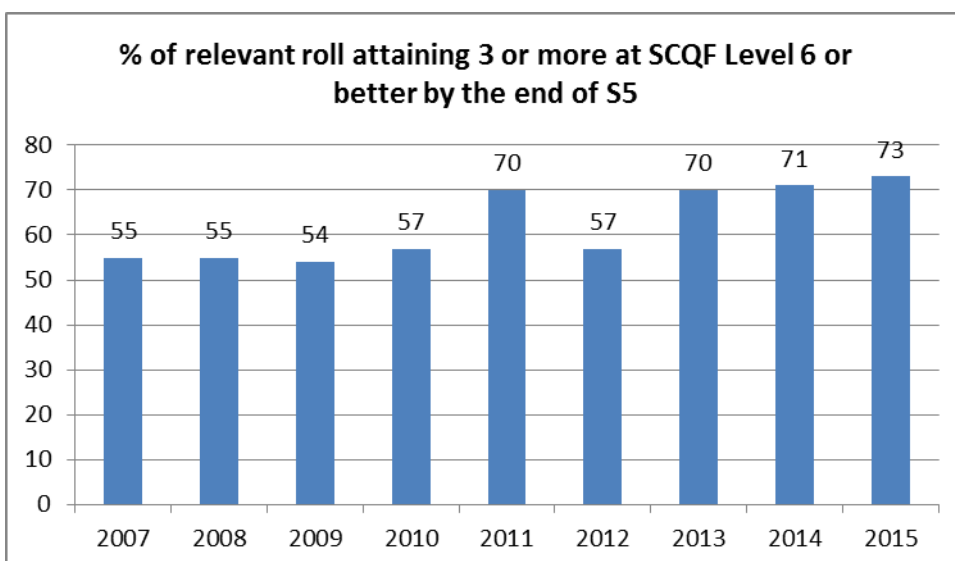
Graph 2 illustrates a continuing strong S4 pupil performance following the introduction of the new National Qualifications. Pupils' performance dipped slightly in 2011 following an improving trend. This trend returned in 2012 and continued in 2013 and 2014. Given the introduction of the new National Qualifications the S4 attainment in 2015 is still a strong performance with results 11% above those in 2007.

**Graph 2**



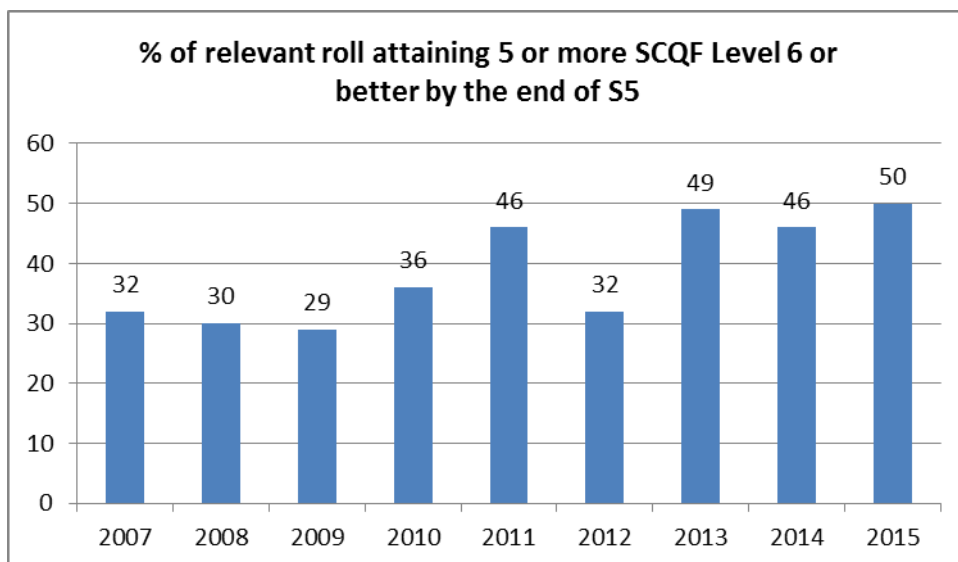
Graphs 3 and 4 demonstrate an increased level of performance by our pupils in Higher examinations. As can be seen from Graph 3 the proportion of our S5 pupils achieving 3 or more Highers continued an improving trend with 2015 being our best performance in this indicator to date and 16% above that in 2007.

**Graph 3**



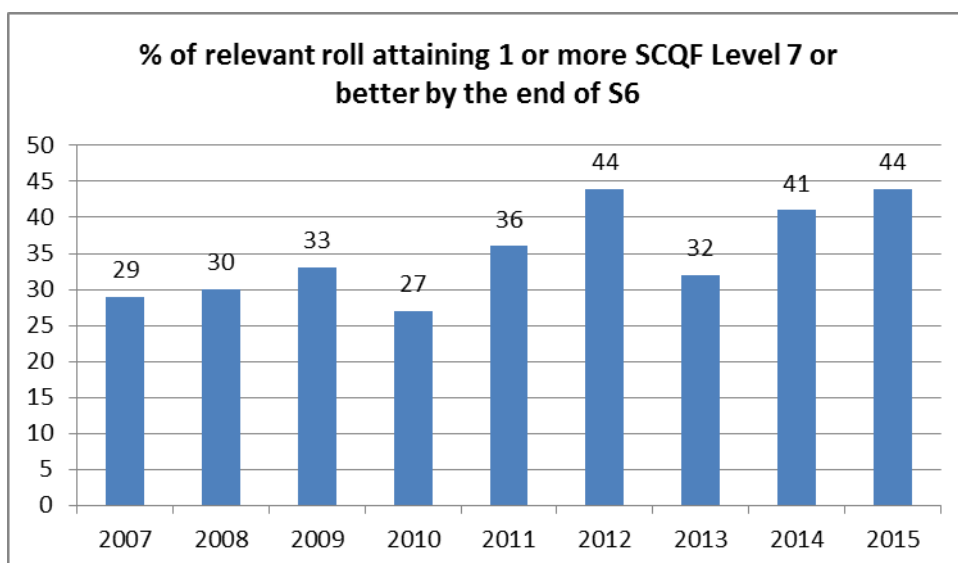
Graph 4 illustrates a similar pattern in relation to the proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more Highers. 2015 was again our best performance in this indicator to date and 18% above that in 2007. In addition, one of our S5 pupils was awarded the Royal Society Chemistry prize for Higher Chemistry.

**Graph 4**



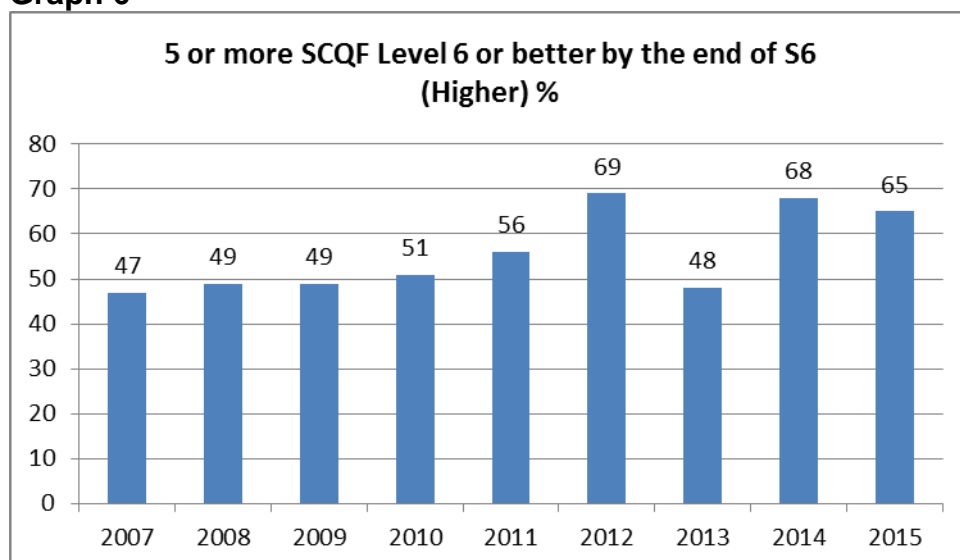
Graph 5 illustrates an increased level of performance by our pupils in Advanced Higher Examinations. As can be seen from the Graph the proportion of our S6 pupils achieving 1 or more Advanced Highers dipped in 2013. In 2014 and 2015 however the results improved again. This was another strong performance with results our joint best performance to date and 15% higher than in 2007.

**Graph 5**



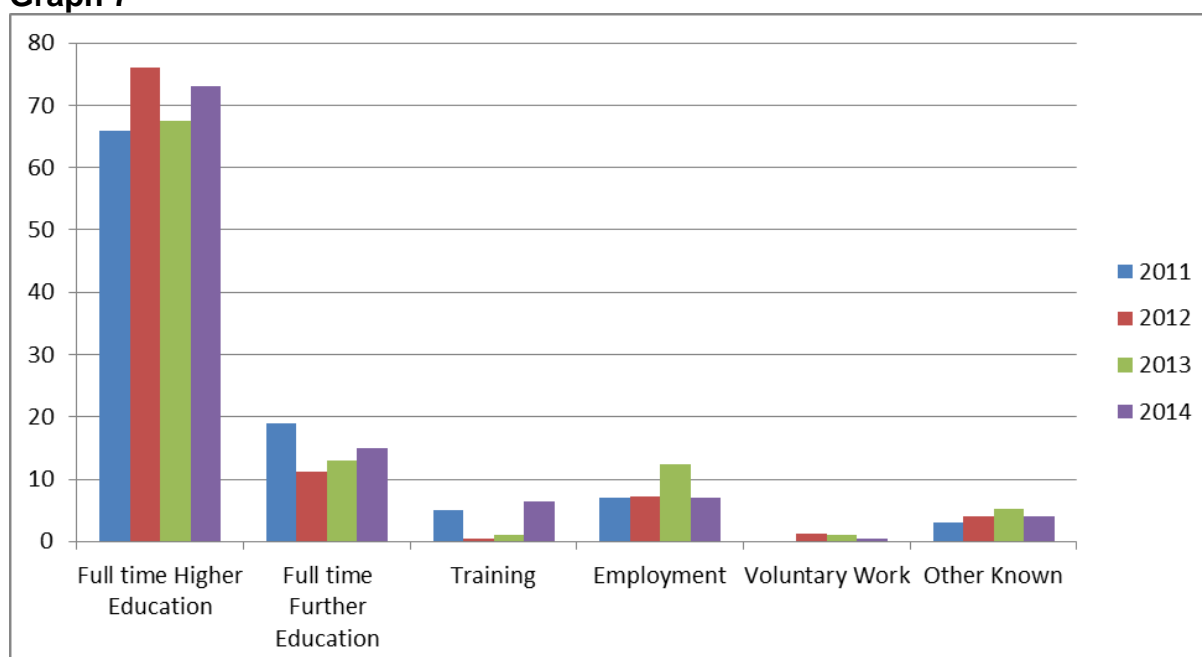
As can be seen from Graph 6, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more Highers by the end of S6 decreased dramatically in 2013. In 2014, however, the results improved again in line with the increasing trend and remained at a very high level in 2015, 18% above those in 2007.

**Graph 6**



As can be seen from Graph 7 these impressive examination results contribute to the sustained positive destinations achieved by our pupils on leaving school, with almost 90% moving on to Further or Higher education and 98.3% in a sustained positive destination of some sort.

**Graph 7**



Again, based on our extensive questionnaire results, 96% of our Pupils and Parents agree that *'Pupils are challenged and supported in their learning'* and that *'Pupils' learning is progressing well.'*

The Convener of Education & Equalities and the Director of Education jointly wrote *“Congratulations to all staff, pupils and parents in recognition of the outstanding achievements of the last school session...Thanks to everyone for their efforts in securing the excellent results and look forward to hearing of further achievements.”*

Following on from this very strong performance in the 2015 SQA Examinations it seems appropriate to reiterate the comment from the HMle Inspection in April 2011.

*“The School performs exceptionally well in national examinations for S4, S5 and S6. Young peoples attainment at these stages is consistently above national averages and much better than in schools serving young people with similar needs and backgrounds.”*

HMle Inspection Report April 2011

## Raising Achievement

Raising pupils' personal achievements continues to be a key strength in our school. Yet again this session our pupils, encouraged, supported and challenged by our staff and parents, have excelled in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular fields.

We ran more than 30 extra-curricular clubs for our pupils, including new clubs in Cricket and Handball, involving a similar number of staff and over 600 pupils. 19 of our pupils were awarded the ERC Convener's Award for Outstanding Achievement in a wide range of fields.

Our success in skiing continues to go from strength to strength and our school team again won the Scottish Schools Autumn Dual Slalom competition. Our swimming team also performed very well at the Scottish School Swimming Championships winning two Silver and one Bronze medal. In addition our pupils are performing very well in athletics, with 17 pupils representing the Local Authority in a range of events.

We also continue to develop and expand the Sports Leadership opportunities we are offering our pupils. We have two Sports Ambassadors with two Deputies. There are also a large number of pupils developing, organising, supporting and leading sporting events in the school, Cluster and across the Local Authority.

In acknowledgement of our high levels of sporting success we continue to develop the pupil dimension of our Sporting Hall of Fame to celebrate the success of our current pupils.

80% of our parents agree that their child *'benefits from school clubs and activities provided outside the classroom'*, 86% of our pupils agree that they have *'opportunities to celebrate their personal achievement'*.

We continued our success in the area of Enterprise with eleven S6 students forming the *'Red Thistle'* team. The team designed and created a unique tartan for a Mearns Castle High School scarf which is now registered with the Scottish Register of Tartans. Having developed relationships with local commercial organisations at the Avenue and Silverburn shopping centre they were provided with stalls to sell their products direct to the public.

The *Red Thistle* team achieved outstanding results throughout the year amassing 6 of the 8 awards available at the Renfrewshire Regional Finals competition. Progressing to represent the school in the Nationals competition where they picked up the *'Best Marketing'* award.

All 11 members of the team passed the University of Strathclyde Business Examination, with 8 attaining a Merit award and 2 achieving distinctions. The team presented an excellent performance and were a credit to themselves, their team and to the school.

Rachel Hutton, Human Resources Director stated *“I feel the experience has not only expanded my knowledge of the business world but has allowed me to develop my own skills. The most rewarding aspect has been to see our company grow as a team and overcome the challenges we faced.”*

Our pupils also excelled in the field of Performing Arts. The Design Faculty again staged the Creative Star Exhibition which showcased pupils’ work in Art & Design and Technical. Again a number of pupils had their work displayed as part of an ERC Art & Design exhibition and also as part of the SQA Advanced Higher exhibition.

Many pupils passed Associate Board Music Examinations, in a range of instruments, at a variety of levels. We hosted a very successful Winter Concert and a further concert in Spring. One of our S6 pupils won the Eastwood District Rotary Young Musician and Young Singer of the Year competition and then went on to perform exceptionally well in the Rotary Club Young Musician of the Year competition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Our school show ‘A (Pure Brilliant) Midsummer Night’s Dream’ was a great success. After the show a local Councillor commented, *“Please pass on my congratulations to all the staff and pupils who made this such an exceptional performance. It was one of the most unique and innovative shows that I have seen for a very long time, with a special touch of Mearns Castle magic. Well done to everyone.”*

For the first time we also staged a production of ‘Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat’, in partnership with pupils and staff from our Cluster Primary schools. The show was a great success and the Convenor of Education commented *“All the hard work and rehearsals by the feeder primary schools, young people, plus the excellent Mearns Castle High School pupils resulted in one of the best recent productions we have seen of the school. You have now set a very high standard. Well done to all the young people and staff for a truly outstanding performance”.*

Our citizenship work is another great strength in the school. All of our pupils participated in a mock Scottish Independence Referendum, on the day of the Referendum itself, and returned a 74% NO vote. Our S3 Public Speaking team won the East Renfrewshire Youth Speech competition in the Renfrew Speeches Club final.

For the first time we participated in the BBC School Report. During the project the BBC Scotland News School Report producer commented *“We’ve been working with your pupils all week on making their school news reports and I just wanted to say how impressed myself and my team were with them. They were enthusiastic, innovative and a pleasure to work with”.* After the broadcast a local resident commented *“Please pass on my congratulations to the pupils involved in the BBC School Report this morning. As an East Renfrewshire resident and teacher, I was extremely impressed by the quality of the report on the Today programme. Well done”.*

Debating continues to go from strength to strength in our school. The Junior Debating Club continues to grow year on year. For the third year in a row, two Junior clubs will run on a Monday. The S1 debaters now have their own club separate from the S2/3. This consistency of numbers is likely to continue as the highly successful after school debating clubs ran at Eaglesham and Kirkhill Primary schools on Wednesday. These were run by a number of S6 debaters who were involved in the Community Involvement programme. The Senior Club (S4-6) was very well attended this year on a Thursday after school. This session saw the school maintain its participation in most of the main national competitions. Currently Mearns Castle participates in around 14 different competitions at Scottish and UK levels.

2014/15 was another successful competitive year. The school's European Youth Parliament team qualified again from the West of Scotland Regional round. This has now happened in three of the last four years. The team will travel again to compete in the National Forum to be held in Liverpool Hope University in September. It is also notable that Mearns Castle now has a regular number of pupils trialling annually for the Scotland National Debating Team in the World Schools Competition. The school also now annually hosts a 'development squad' day for the Scotland trialists. The school's Junior debaters are also now involved in more competitions than in any previous year. One Mearns Castle Junior team from S3 won the annual 'Hot Air Cup' which was hosted at Douglas Academy, Milngavie this year. 2014/15 was also the first year that some Junior debaters participated in senior competitions. This will give the debaters in question valuable experience for the years ahead. Overall, 2014/15 was a successful year in both debating achievement and participation.

In addition over 150 pupils gained Duke of Edinburgh Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards and a group of S5 pupils participated in a World Challenge expedition to Swaziland. A further 118 pupils achieved an award in Sports Leadership, with 66 pupils also achieving a Saltire Award.

Our impressive tradition of Charity fund-raising continued. Our annual Charities Week raised over £9200 to be donated to a range of charities. £2500 of this money was donated to our main partner charity The Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice. The remaining money was divided equally between our six Houses. Pupils in each House then voted on which Charity they would like to receive their share of the money and thereafter cheques were presented to the recipients at House Assemblies. Further sums of money were raised and donated to MND Scotland, Young Minds, Cancer charities and following a 'Christmas Jumper Day', Save the Children. In addition we collected dried food donations, at our three Christmas dances, which were delivered by S5 Prefects to people in hardship in our local community. Following our charity fund-raising, the Senior Community Fundraiser at the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice commented "*We are absolutely overwhelmed at the level of support we have received from Mearns Castle High School over the years*", a local resident commented "*I am touched by the generosity of the staff and pupils who are responsible for my surprise Christmas 'box of goodies'. Please convey my thanks to all concerned*".

During the session the Head Teacher sent out over 100 Praise postcards to acknowledge the outstanding achievements of individual pupils. As well as range of Praise postcards, newsletters, assemblies and award ceremonies we have a 'Colours' scheme and a 'Pride of House' scheme as strategies for recognising pupils' achievements in areas such as those described above. The number of pupils achieving and wearing 'Colours' currently stands at over 750 and continues to increase. It is with great pride we see pupils wearing their braided blazers, badges and Colours ties around the school.

98% of Pupils, Staff and Parents agree that our school develops '*Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors to Society.*'

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## Section 2

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### **How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders? (How Good is Our School QI 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2)**

### **How good is the quality of our pupils' learning experience? (How Good is Our School QI 2.1)**

As a school and Cluster, again this session we dedicated a considerable amount of time and resources to developing and improving our curriculum, in line with Curriculum for Excellence. All Faculties/Departments continued to review and improve their S1 and S2 courses, in line with the CfE Broad General Education. In particular they continued to improve their arrangements for assessment and moderation. This work continued to incorporate the 'Responsibilities for All' in the dimensions of Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing. To support this work our PT Development continued with the regular e-publication entitled 'The Lit Num - Keeping Literacy and Numeracy on the Agenda'. This publication continued to be very well received by staff. In addition we concluded the consultation on our newly devised Literacy Strategy. The strategy was, thereafter, launched with staff to support the learning and teaching of Literacy skills across the curriculum. In addition S1 and S2 pupils, again, participated in our Literacy and Numeracy events to emphasise the importance of these core skills. Pupils also participated in 'Walk to School Week', to maintain our focus on Health and Wellbeing.

As a Cluster we continued to develop our understanding of CfE levels, standards and progression, in a number of curriculum areas: Literacy, Numeracy, Science, Modern Languages and PE. In addition, staff in Cluster Pre-5 establishments were supported to adopt innovative approaches to learning and teaching to enable all children to be appropriately challenged and supported and to make progress across all areas of their development and learning. We also shared best practice in strategies for reporting pupils' progress to Parents and the use of Click & Go Pastoral Notes leading to improved practice in both of these areas of work.

We continued to develop and improve opportunities for pupils to be involved in interdisciplinary learning. We continue to enhance the learning experiences at our three principal year group events: S1 Rapid Response, S2 Eco Challenge and S3 Headliner. S1 S Factor and Scottish Heritage also continue to be successful and enjoyable events. Teachers in our IDL Improvement Team and others from a variety of subject areas have supported and been involved in interdisciplinary events and activities and these activities have been developed reviewed and continually improved in the light of pupil and staff evaluations and focus groups. Faculties/Departments continued to embed interdisciplinary learning within the classroom in line with school and Faculty/Department Improvement Plans. Arrangements for staff sharing best practice are available through a shared interdisciplinary folder and examples of good practice in the form of IDL templates are available to staff to support effective and accurate recording. Reference to IDL experiences adds new features in pupil reports. Parents, pupils and staff have been well informed of interdisciplinary activities and events, through newsletters in school and those sent home to parents as well as through the school web site.

A key target in our Improvement Plan 2014–2015 was to continue to develop Course and Assessment materials for the new SQA National Qualifications, at SCQF Levels 1-7, in all relevant subjects. Teaching staff in all Faculties/Departments, in some instances in collaboration with their colleagues in the Local Authority, made excellent progress with this

work and the new courses were ready for pupils at the start of the new timetable in June 2015.

We continued with our new pilot model of lesson observations with the remaining Faculties and Departments. The arrangements again involved members of the SLT working together with staff in Faculty's/Department's own self-evaluation. The remaining Faculties/Departments also piloted a cross-curriculum model of lesson observation. Both models received very positive evaluations from the staff involved and again confirmed for us that the quality of teaching and pupils' learning experiences was very good and in many instances excellent. We will conduct a final evaluation of our lesson observation arrangements for this session to determine the best model to implement for session 2015-2016. In addition we continued with our systematic programme of lesson observations for Probationer teachers.

We continued to strive to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the school. In particular we continued to focus on developing and sharing our practice in AifL strategies. A key aspect of this work, again, was a group of teachers continuing their involvement in the Education Department/Tapestry Teacher Learning Communities initiative. Teachers from all Faculties/Departments in the school continued their involvement and were confident that their participation contributed to improvements in their practice and the quality of pupils' experiences.

In addition to our work on improving learning and teaching we continued to improve our Classroom Management procedures and our UPBEAT Scheme, focussing on promoting, recording and rewarding positive behaviour. It is again very encouraging to note that during this session, again, over 90% of our pupils remained 'on colour' and over 600 pupils participated in a variety of events in our UPBEAT Activities Day Out, at the end of June. In addition, and of equal importance, we maintained a very low rate of pupil exclusions.

We consulted over 1000 pupils, from S1-S6, on their learning experiences and 94% agreed that they were *'supported and challenged in their learning'* also 98% agreed that staff expected them to *'take responsibility for their own work in class'*. Pupils commented, *"I love being a pupil in this school because the teachers are very nice and when you ask for help they give you it. When it comes to tests I feel very confident because teachers give you as much help as you need"* and *"Mearns Castle is a great school and has helped me to develop my confidence. I have been given plenty of opportunities to participate and express myself and I am constantly being pushed to my full potential"*.

From questionnaire evidence 99% of staff agreed that *'Staff regularly discuss how to improve achievement for all pupils'* and 96% agreed that *'All pupils participate in activities which meet their learning needs'*. Teachers commented *"I have never worked in a school where staff are so dedicated and working towards improving achievement for all pupils"* and *"A very positive ethos exists at Mearns Castle and I'm delighted to be a member of the teaching staff"*.

These sentiments are confirmed by the views of parents. Of the 632 who responded to our consultations 98% agreed that *"The school helps my child be more confident"* and *"My child enjoys learning at school"*. 96% agreed *"My child's learning is progressing well"*. Parents' commented *"My son is loving Mearns Castle – he feels included and is engaged in his classes"*, *"I am very happy with Mearns Castle. Not only the learning but with the support and care of the teachers to the pupils"* and *"My child is very happy at Mearns Castle and we are confident that he is getting a high quality education"*.

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## How actively involved are parents and carers in the life of the school? (How Good is Our School QI 2.2)

We continue to have a very active Parent Council and PTA both of which make an important contribution to the life of the school. Our PTA arranged and contributed to a variety of fund-raising activities, in particular, our increasingly popular PTA Quiz Night. The PTA, again, made a valuable contribution to the ethos and the resources of the school. The Parent Council meets six times per session and the meetings are well attended. Members of the Council participated in a number of consultations about the work of the school, most notably on our arrangements for promoting Positive Mental Health among our pupils. The results of this work helped to inform the school's Improvement Planning process. They were also consulted on the school's draft Improvement Plan 2015-2016, before the plan was finalised.

Our parents participate well in relevant meetings and school events. Almost all parents attend their child's Parents' Meeting. Over 90% of parents stated that our new online system for booking Parents' Meetings is an improvement on the previous arrangements. In addition, well over 350 parents attended four Curriculum Information evenings, for parents of pupils in S1, S3, S5 and S6. Specific Information Evenings were also arranged for parents of pupils in S2, S4 and S5 as part of our Course Option Choice programme. These were also very well attended, as was our Transition Information Evening, for parents of P7 pupils. In addition we organised an Information Evening for parents of pupils in S2 and S3 dealing with Promoting Good Mental Health, Resilience and Positive Communication with Teenagers. This event was very positively evaluated by those in attendance.

We have also consulted extensively with parents on their views of the school. Based on evidence from 630 questionnaires from parents of pupils in all year groups our families are very satisfied with the quality of education we provide. 98% of parents agreed that *'My child enjoys learning at school'* and 96% agreed that *'My child's learning is progressing well.'* 99% also stated that they are *'Happy with our school.'* Parents commented *"My son has benefitted from excellent teaching throughout his years at Mearns Castle", "Mearns Castle is an excellent school, my daughter is fortunate to be a pupil and benefitting from the wealth of talent the teaching staff have to offer"* and *"Magnificent school, teaching staff and support staff are exemplary"*.

## How actively involved are staff in the life of the school? (How Good is Our School QI 3.1)

Our staff are motivated and committed professionals with high expectations who make very effective contributions, individually and in teams, to the work of the school.

Staff work together to provide our pupils with high quality learning experiences. Representatives from Faculties/Departments continued to work together in Teacher Learning Communities to further improve their pedagogy. Staff are also committed to offering an increasingly extensive menu of extra-curricular activities, as evidenced by the wide range of pupil achievements referred to earlier in this report. They also, as stated earlier, work very effectively with each other and with pupils and parents in the field of Charity fund-raising.

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Staff are also committed to developing their own learning through continuous lifelong professional learning. All staff participated in our PRD programme, as well as our fully implemented the GTCS Professional Update arrangements. Our CPD budget was, again, fully allocated and our in-house CPD programme was, again, very well attended and positively evaluated. 94% of all staff agreed that *'Staff across the school share good practice'*.

Our In Service days and Collegiate meetings this session covered a range of topics crucial to the improvement of the school. A great deal of time continues to be allocated at Cluster, School and Faculty/Departmental level to moving forward our work on Curriculum for Excellence, particularly in relation to Assessment, Moderation and Tracking in the Broad General Education. Indeed, we piloted a new procedure for tracking S1-S3 pupils' progress through the Broad General Education and we will fully implement this approach next session.

Substantial time was also given to further development of Courses and Assessments in preparation for presenting our first cohort of S4 pupils for the new SQA National Examinations in May 2015. Staff from every Faculty/Department attended Education Department training in Moderation and Verification for the new SQA National qualifications. In addition, more than 75 staff were active members of a range of School and Cluster Improvement Teams which made a vital contribution to the achievement of a range of targets in our Improvement Plans. We also had many staff involved in Education Department Improvement Teams.

All staff are regularly consulted on a range of different aspects of the work of the school including the School Improvement Plan. They are regularly involved in evaluating the value and success of our collegiate activities.

Across the six In Service days 97% of staff agreed that *'The programme of activities contributed to their professional development'* and almost 100% agreed that *'The programme of activities contributed to departmental/school improvement.'* The evaluations of our Extended Leadership Team meetings were universally positive. Staff commented *"The meetings have been excellent, a great opportunity to learn from others and support each other."*

All Faculties and Departments continue to produce their own Standards and Quality Reports showcasing the high quality of work that takes place each session.

As an acknowledgement of the collegiate involvement and development of our staff our school, along with the other secondary schools in the Local Authority, continues to be commended by Investors in People. More than 97% of our staff agree that they *'enjoy working at Mearns Castle High School.'*

## How successful are we in our engagement with the local Community? (How Good is Our School QI 4.1)

We are very committed to Partnership working with our Cluster Schools. We have very positive relationships in our Cluster and we continue to make impressive progress in our Cluster working. This session we carried out a self-evaluation review of our Cluster Transition arrangements, focused on further improving those arrangements, where possible. We also had Standing Committees in Literacy and Numeracy, as well as Improvement Teams focussing on Modern Languages, PE and Science. Following the work of the PE Improvement Team one Primary School commented *"I just wanted to extend a huge thank you to you both for the fantastic CLPL opportunities for our P5 and 6 staff over the past two weeks. The teachers have all been raving about what they have seen and they are all keen to apply lots of new ideas, particularly relating to peer evaluations and discussing theory throughout lessons too. It has been a really successful model!"* A further Improvement Team was established to continue our improvement of learning and teaching in Pre-5 establishments.

As part of our Transitions process we continued our very successful P6 Choices for Champions event led by our Campus Police Officer. Our S6 pupils visit their Primary schools to talk to P7 pupils about their experience of Mearns Castle. P7 pupils from our Cluster schools are also involved in our Carnegie Shadowing Scheme and Quiz, organised by our Librarian and a Maths Quiz organised by our Maths Department. We also continued to run a Summer Volleyball Camp for P7 pupils before they join us in S1. As a result of these activities, following our P7 Induction Days, 98% of our current S1 pupils agreed that they were *'looking forward to coming to Mearns Castle in August.'* P7 pupils commented *"I really enjoyed the Induction Days and I can't wait for S1", "It was Awesome!"* and *"I can't wait for August."* In addition 100% of parents of our current S1 pupils agreed that *'Overall I believe that the transition programme is a good preparation for coming to secondary school.'*

Our pupils were actively involved in the Local Community in a number of contexts. 100% of our S4 pupils, again, successfully participated in our Work Experience programme and one S6 pupil carried out work experience in the office of our local MSP. Pupils in our S4 Personal Development class were involved in supporting a local playgroup. Playgroup staff commented that they were all *"genuinely a credit to the school."* Through our Community Involvement programme, a large number of S6 pupils take part in a range of community placements, including in our Cluster Schools.

Our extensive Charity work also allows us to work in partnership with our local community. We, again, donated £1000 each to six House Charities. We also raised a further £430 for Save the Children with our Christmas Jumper Day. In particular, we work in close partnership with the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice, with whom we have a very close and ongoing fund-raising relationship. Our pupils are involved in a number of events with the Hospice each session.

Our Pupil Support Learning Department continued to work with the pupils in our Dyslexia Support Group to provide advice and support on Dyslexia for pupils, teachers and parents across the Authority. To mark Dyslexia Week pupils in the group were interviewed by STV for a news story on dyslexia. In addition staff in the department also continue with an ASD Parent Group to provide advice and support in relation to Young People with Communication Needs.

Our pupils successfully participated in a number of competitions organised by the Local Rotary Club.

Representatives of local organisations are also frequently involved in the life of the school. We have an extensive programme of speakers who support the delivery of our PSE and Citizenship programme, particularly in the senior school. We also have community coaches and a number of parents who support our extra-curricular sports provision. We work closely with a local chef on our annual Hospitality events and other business mentors work with our successful Young Enterprise Team. We have also developed a close relationship with SANA UKCC through Eaglesham Angling Association.

Yet again, we hosted a very successful Careers Event for S2-S6 pupils and parents, with representatives of approximately 50 employers and Further and Higher Education institutions in attendance. This event was attended by around 300 families who regarded it as 'Well organised', 'Informative' and 'Enjoyable'. The delegates were also very positive in their comments about the organisation of the event and the contribution of our pupils.

Our Campus Police Officer continued to make an excellent contribution both in school and across the Cluster. As well as making important contributions to our PSE and Citizenship programme, on Social Media and Intranet Safety, he also continued and led our P6 Champions in Schools Cluster event. In addition staff from the Education Psychology Department supported a group of pupils with their exam preparation.

In the evening and at weekends the school building and playing fields also function as a community resource and host a range of sports clubs and other community events.

## **How successful are we in our engagement with the wider Community? (How Good is Our School QI 4.2)**

Yet again this session we were successful in developing a range of partnerships with our wider community.

Through our Duke of Edinburgh Programme over 150 pupils have participated in expeditions in Scotland and gone on to achieve their Bronze, Silver and Gold awards. A group of S5 pupils were involved in a World Team Challenge expedition to Swaziland. In addition, we had a large number of staff and pupils involved in trips to a variety of destinations in Britain and Europe.

Our Modern Languages Department worked in partnership with the University of Strathclyde on the Language Ambassador Programme.

We were involved in an Education Scotland Curriculum for Excellence good practice fieldwork visit, following which the Professional Advisor commented that she *"had a thoroughly enjoyable day with the highlight being meeting S1 pupils and seeing and hearing about their inspirational work!* In addition Education Scotland invited our Principal Teacher Development to address staff from Edinburgh City Council on the Numeracy work in the school. He was also invited to make a presentation at the National Numeracy Network which a Senior Education Officer described as *'fantastic'*. An Education Department QIO commented that the presentation was *"outstanding"* and she *"felt very proud to be associated with Mearns Castle High School."*

As a school we also participated in the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy and the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment 2015. In addition a group of senior pupils were invited to appear in a video to promote the MySQA service. The Creative Director said the pupils involved were *"a real credit to the school."* A group of senior pupils also participated in the UK Meningococcal Carriage Study.

In partnership with SDS we hosted a visit by a group of Careers guidance students from Sweden. The Careers Advisor who organised the trip stated that the students *“very much enjoyed their visit which allowed us to showcase the work we do in schools and present a really positive example of partnership working in practice.”*

We also have many staff who work with Education Scotland and the SQA at a national level.

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## **Section 3**

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### **How good is our Leadership? (How Good is Our School QI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4)**

#### **Vision, Values and Aims (How Good is Our School QI 9.1)**

Our shared Vision, Values and Aims were agreed with our stakeholders during session 2009-2010. We continue to use our Vision, Values and Aims to guide and evaluate the work of our school. Our self-evaluation strategy, in relation to our consultation with Pupils, Parents and Staff is based on our Vision, Values and Aims.

Following our Inspection, HMIE commented in their report in April 2011, *“Mearns Castle is a highly achieving school community with a clear sense of direction. There is a strong sense of ownership of the school among staff and young people.”* We are confident from our self-evaluation evidence that these aspects of the school have improved even further from that time.

#### **Leadership and Direction (How Good is Our School QI 9.2)**

The work of our school is guided by the School and Faculty/Department Improvement Plans and the central focus of this documentation continues to be the improvement of teaching and learning in the school. The School Improvement Plan is subject to extensive consultation with our stakeholders prior to agreement. When finally agreed, the details of the Plan are shared with the same groups. The School Plan forms the basis of Faculty/ Department Plans and other priorities in the school.

The focus on learning and teaching continues to be central to the work of leaders in the school, who are involved in an extensive programme of lesson observations across and within departments, stimulating self-evaluation, using coaching strategies to facilitate effective and valuable dialogue and employing a range of strategies through which to share best practice within and between Faculties and Departments. In addition, the areas for improvement identified through this work, are incorporated into future plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

## **Developing People and Partnerships (How Good is Our School QI 9.3)**

There is a commitment in our school to a consultative and collegiate approach. All teaching staff are fully consulted on the school's Working Time Agreement which allows staff to organise their time to best meet the needs of the school and of school improvement.

The Head Teacher meets with Trade Union Representatives and School Support staff on a regular basis. Both the Senior Leadership and the Extended Leadership Team meet on a regular basis, as do Faculty and Department Teams. We practise a model of distributive and consultative leadership in which more than 75 members of staff are actively involved in Cluster and School Improvement Teams and other initiatives. In addition un-promoted staff regularly participate in Extended Leadership Team meetings. They are also involved in shadowing the Pupil Support Team as well as mentoring Probationer Teachers and Students.

In addition, staff are regularly consulted on a wide range of issues. We also publish a weekly Staff newsletter in which staff achievements are recognised and celebrated.

Following our Inspection, HMle commented in their report in April 2011, *"Many staff lead their own learning and professional development through sharing good practice and engaging with new initiatives. There is a strong supportive culture amongst staff at all levels."* Again, based on self-evaluation evidence, we are confident that these aspects of the work of the school have improved even further from that time.

## **Leadership of Improvement and Change (How Good is Our School QI 9.4)**

Leaders in the school are committed to maintaining a high level of quality and promoting continuous improvement and excellence in educational provision for our pupils.

In session 2009-2010 we decided to benchmark our performance against the standard for excellence. We have embarked on a self-evaluative programme, to benchmark our performance against the ten dimensions of The Journey to Excellence. As a school we considered four of the ten dimensions in session 2009-2010. We continued our self-evaluation against a further three during session 2012-2013 leaving us the final three to consider at an appropriate time in the future. It is our intention that on completion of this task, if not before, our school performance will be excellent in every dimension.

In our Inspection report of April 2011 *'Strong leadership for learning across the school'* was noted as a particular strength of the school and this is certainly still the case.

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## Section 4

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### What is our capacity for Improvement? (How Good is Our School QI 10)

In our Inspection Report of April 2011 the work of the school was evaluated as 'Very Good' in two dimensions and 'Excellent' in three. Inspectors commented, *"As a result of the excellent quality of education provided by the school we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection."* We are very confident, from the evidence shared in this report, that we have now improved substantially from this evaluation and that we have the capacity to improve further.

We believe that we have the necessary ingredients, a clear and shared vision for the school, talented, hard working and motivated staff and pupils, active, caring and supportive parents, positive and successful partnership arrangements, a challenging and supportive Education Department, and very effective and committed leadership to ensure that we will continue to improve the school and achieve our goal of excellence in everything we do.

Our main priorities for session 2015 -2016, as we continue to strive towards our goal of excellence in every dimension, are as follows:

- Develop further our current strategies for raising attainment and achievement and continue to increase the proportion of our learners in sustained positive destinations
- Continue to develop our curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence including continuing to increase the range of flexible learning and achievement pathways to meet the needs of all pupils
- Implement the recommendations of the Education Department's Developing the Young Workforce strategy
- Continue to improve the quality of Teaching and Learning particularly through the use of ICT / Wifi / BYOD
- Continue to improve the effectiveness of parental involvement in learning
- Consolidate a culture of self-evaluation that is focussed on improving Teaching and Learning including improved use of Insight
- Develop further our GIRFEC arrangements for the Care, Welfare and Development of our pupils in particular relation to positive mental health
- Continue to improve our arrangements relating to Pupil Voice

More details, on each of these priorities, can be found in our Improvement Plan 2015-2016, which is available on the school's website.

Dean Smith  
Head Teacher

January 2016