

2 February 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Coltness High School
North Lanarkshire Council**

In May 2014, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. 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 how the school has continued 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 how well young people are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

The ethos of the school continues to be positive and caring. Most young people enjoy school and feel encouraged to achieve their best. Their behaviour and attitude to learning remain a strength of the school. However, a significant minority of young people raised concerns about bullying and other issues relating to their sense of wellbeing in school. We have asked the school to work with young people, parents and relevant partners to address these concerns. Where teachers apply the *Coltness Lesson* effectively, young people engage well in planning aspects of their learning and take responsibility for their progress during lessons. Since our last visit, the school has introduced new systems to monitor the progress of young people in S4 to S6. As a result, young people have more conversations about their learning and achievement with class teachers and guidance staff and benefit from additional support when they need it. The next stage is to engage young people in setting meaningful attainment targets which are discussed and reviewed regularly. This will ensure young people remain challenged through aspirational goals. Young people in S1 to S3 would benefit from similar improvements in tracking and monitoring. They need more opportunities to discuss how well they are doing and what they need to do to continue building on their successes.

The school continues to provide a wide range of valuable opportunities for young people to achieve. Through these many young people are increasing their confidence and achieving important skills for learning, life and work. Progress has been made in tracking young people's success in awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Sports Leaders UK awards and Saltire awards. Plans are in place to develop this further to ensure all young people become active participants

who benefit from all the school has to offer. The school has continued to raise attainment and improve positive destinations for young people when they leave school. Staying on rates have also recently increased. Overall, young people are now achieving as well as, and in some measures better than, young people with similar needs and backgrounds in other schools across Scotland. This is a significant achievement which the school should continue to build on.

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

Across the school young people's learning is more varied and motivating. More lessons include tasks and activities which enable them to work in pairs and groups. Most young people have very positive relationships with their teachers. They feel able to access help when they need it. During lessons, effective interventions by teachers and support staff enable all young people to engage with the planned learning for the class. There remains scope for teachers to plan a wider range of tasks and activities which take into account young people's varying needs and abilities. Too often we saw the whole class being set the same work and this was not always appropriate.

The school has created a new curriculum structure for young people in S1 and S2. Almost all young people now have their entitlement to learn a modern language across these stages. Time for other curriculum areas such as art and music has been increased and young people are now able to make better progress in these areas. The curriculum for S3 now requires improvement so that all young people continue to make progress and achieve through a broad general education. Young people need a stronger foundation of skills development and opportunities to move on to learning pathways which meet their needs. Some necessary improvements to the curriculum for S1 to S3 which we previously highlighted have not yet been taken forward. These include the delivery of literacy and numeracy across all subject areas and increased opportunities for young people to link learning from different subjects to gain a deeper understanding of aspects of their work. All young people in S4 now study English and have the opportunity to leave school with higher levels of accreditation in both English and mathematics. Arrangements for young people attending college for part of their week have been improved so that they no longer miss learning in other subject areas. The school's previously strong work with partners who enhance the curriculum has been further enhanced through recently developed partnerships with organisations such as *Doctors Against Postcodes* and the *Polar Academy*. These developments continue to raise young people's aspirations and increase their skills and resilience. There is a need now to pull everything together in a more coherent way and develop a shared understanding of what the curriculum in Coltness High School aims to achieve for all young people.

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

Since our previous visit there have been a number of staffing changes in the school. A new headteacher took up post in April 2014 and there have been other changes in senior management and in several teaching posts across the school. Recruitment and accessing supply teachers has at times been challenging and we are aware this has worried some parents and young people. There has also been a major change to the structure of the school week. Despite these changes and challenges, the

school has continued to build on the positive aspects of learning and teaching we highlighted previously and also improved young people's attainment and wider achievement. The new 33 period week has enabled the school to improve the breadth and balance of the curriculum. Going forward, it will also support improvements in partnership working with neighbouring secondary schools which will further enhance the curriculum for senior young people.

The new headteacher has already gained much respect across the school community. He has engaged well with the Parent Council and brought a renewed energy to the school. He has worked hard to ensure all vacancies are filled as quickly as possible. He and his senior leadership team demonstrate high levels of commitment to ensuring high quality learning experiences for all young people. They now need to increase the pace of improvement to ensure the school gets on track with fully implementing Curriculum for Excellence. Staff work well in teams across the school. They share ideas and resources, support each other to reflect on their practice and seek out opportunities for professional development. To ensure this collegiate working and their professional learning leads to consistently high quality learning and teaching staff should seek to formalise more of the feedback they give each other and set higher levels of challenge to continue improving their practice.

What happens next?

The school has taken forward some of the priorities we highlighted and these are already impacting positively through increases in successes and achievements for young people. However important aspects for development in relation to the curriculum and self-evaluation have not been sufficiently addressed. As a result, our Area Lead Officer will work with North Lanarkshire Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out another further inspection within a year of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Patricia Watson
HM Inspector

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