

13 January 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Brannock High School
North Lanarkshire Council**

In January 2013, 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?

Young people continue to be well behaved and willing to learn. Good relationships between staff and young people are evident throughout the school and attendance has improved. The school has focused on involving young people more in their learning and progress. Staff have developed home learning successfully to share learning with parents and build on work done in school. Overall, the pace in lessons is brisk although there is scope to move into activities faster at the start. Young people benefit from more opportunities to work together in pairs and groups. They use these opportunities very well and engage in thoughtful discussions on their work. They have a clearer picture of what they do well and where they need to improve and are developing their skills in evaluating their own and each other's work. However, they still need to be clearer on the standards expected and on what success looks like.

Young people continue to develop confidence and useful skills for life through the range of sporting, volunteering and cultural activities available to them in school and through community links. A good number of young people achieve accreditation such as a Dynamic Youth Award, through these activities. The school celebrates and shares learning and achievements better through wall displays, for example, and is in the process of improving the school website. The school is introducing new ways of enabling young people to achieve awards through class work. This includes the new Connect course at S1 to S3 which focuses on developing core skills and the Making a Difference course at S5. The latter, based firmly on volunteering in the community, has already facilitated important and worthwhile links with residents of a sheltered housing complex. The school now offers young people more opportunities

to develop skills in leadership, including through the new leadership academy for senior pupils. Staff now need to ensure that young people take greater responsibility for leading their own learning and development in the classroom and through out-of-class activities.

Staff continue to develop approaches to assessing young people's performance more effectively at S1 to S3. From S4 to S6, attainment remains an area for improvement. There are no clear signs of improving trends in young people's attainment at these stages. Young people's performance in literacy and numeracy is broadly in line with that of other young people with similar needs and backgrounds from across Scotland. The school has recently put in place revised systems for monthly monitoring of young people's performance. This is keeping parents and young people better informed of progress towards agreed targets. It is too early to see any impact from this work on attainment. We have asked staff to continue to improve young people's attainment across the school.

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

The school continues to provide strong and effective pastoral support to young people. Young people feel valued and know that staff will help them with any concerns. There are clear and effective mechanisms, including links with outside agencies, to support those who need additional support to help them learn. However, classroom tasks and activities are still not sufficiently well matched to the information and communications technology learning needs of all. Some learners require a more staged approach to help them engage with difficult concepts. At the same time, there remains considerable scope to increase the level of challenge for all, but particularly for the more able.

Following further consultation with parents and young people, the school has continued to develop the curriculum to meet young people's needs better. In a number of subject areas however, staff still need to ensure that courses address the key aspects of learning outlined in Curriculum for Excellence and that they share the criteria for success with learners. Commendably, the school has increased the number of courses linked more directly to future employment pathways such as the introduction of computer games design. Hairdressing is now delivered in the school's own salon. Recently, the school has placed a strong focus on health and wellbeing, particularly through work done by physical education and home economics staff. The school has started to take a broader approach to developing literacy and numeracy. However, much remains to be done to ensure that young people's skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are addressed through course work across the school. Staff continue to improve learning links with the associated primary schools and should maintain this focus to build greater understanding of progress in core skills from P7 to S1.

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

The school has refocused its work to address the main recommendations in the previous inspection report. Senior staff have asked curriculum leaders and class teachers to reflect more closely on how they address those priorities in their day-to-day work with young people. Staff share good practice more, for example by

observing each other's lessons. The school has reviewed the ways in which it finds out how well it is delivering for young people. Senior managers need to use the information gathered more rigorously to address areas of weakness and focus developments on where they are most needed. Managers encourage staff to develop their skills in leadership. As a result, teachers appreciate being supported in developing initiatives within and outwith their subject area. The school should continue to find ways of involving staff more in leading whole-school initiatives which have the potential to make a positive difference to young people's learning and achievements.

What happens next?

The school has made progress in improving the learning experience of young people and encouraging them to grow in confidence as leaders. Staff have reviewed aspects of the curriculum and it continues to develop. Staff continue to be supported in taking on leadership roles. The school needs more time to deliver further improvements and to demonstrate that these have had a positive impact on young people's achievement.

As a result, our Area Lead Officer will work with North Lanarkshire Council to build capacity for improvement and will continue to engage with the school to monitor and support progress. We shall ask North Lanarkshire Council to provide us with a progress report within one year from the date of this report and the Area Lead Officer will discuss the school's progress with the council at that time.

Fiona A Pate
HM Inspector

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