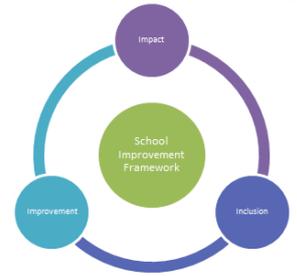




## Extended Learning and Achievement Visit (ELAV) Report Crieff High School 30 & 31 January & 6 March 2019



### BACKGROUND

To support the school in the process of self-evaluation, a team of officers from Education and Children's Services (ECS) visited Crieff High School located within Strathearn Community Campus over 3 days in January and March 2019. The themes for the review were Achievement, Learning and Leadership. These themes were subject to scrutiny through core Quality Indicators from *How good is our school* (4<sup>th</sup> edition).

At the time of the visit the school role was 568. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) consisted of: The Head Teacher; two substantive Depute Head Teachers (DHTs) one (School Improvement); one DHT (Support), one acting DHT (Pupil Equity Fund) and a Business Manager. Attendance in session 2017/18 was 90% which is just below the Perth and Kinross secondary schools and national averages. The school has put an action plan in place to address this.

Information was gathered from class visits, scrutiny of data and evidence from conversations with young people, parents, staff and key partners and from documentation including the school's self-evaluation reports, and whole school policies.

### ACHIEVEMENT

The school reported that at the end of the Broad General Education (BGE) in the 2017/18 session 81% of young people had achieved at third level in Literacy in Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and that 59% had achieved third level in Numeracy. At fourth level of CfE the school reported that 30% of young people in Literacy and 23% had achieved in Numeracy. This data displays an increase in young people's achievement in Literacy from session 2016/17 and this is in line with the Perth and Kinross Council average. The school had identified numeracy as an area of priority in its school improvement plan for the current session and is putting a range of strategies and interventions in place to support improvement in numeracy across the school, having performed below both the PKC and national averages in third and fourth level in CfE and also at National 5 level for numeracy in the Senior Phase. Highly effective practice in the moderation of literacy across departments in the BGE was identified and this practice could be replicated to support the effective development of similar arrangements for numeracy.

In breadth and depth measures, and the key performance indicators measured locally, Crieff High School performs in line with the PKC and the virtual comparator (VC) in 6 of the 7 indicators. In Improving Attainment for All, the lowest 20% and middle 60% perform slightly below or in line with the VC and the highest 20% performed slightly above the VC but below the PKC average. The socio-economic profile of Crieff High School is such that the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) information does not give an accurate reflection of some of the unique social and economic factors affecting children and families in rural areas. The school leadership team understands the school's context very well and are taking steps to develop their curriculum and interventions accordingly. Young people achieve well in National Qualifications and there is the opportunity to access a range of academic qualifications to Advanced Higher. The school have introduced a number of vocational and

alternative qualifications at levels 4 and 5 such as Rural Skills and Retail in addition to new National Progression Awards, for example, Digital Creativity and Cyber Security to provide a breath of curricular pathways. There is a robust Senior Phase tracking process in place which staff report is having a positive impact on achievement and attainment; the school has successfully identified targets for improvements in attainment and is well-placed to continue to drive improvement in this area.

Crieff High School continues to strengthen its approaches to Developing the Young Workforce. Of note is the strategic partnership with a large local employer and the significant increase in S4 pupils accessing work experience placements across the area engaging a significant number of local businesses. The success of this development was recognised in the Chamber of Commerce Awards, where the school was nominated for a Star Award. In the Senior Phase, a number of young people engage in wider achievement awards, in particular the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the John Muir Award. There is engagement with employability programmes enabling a small number of S5 and S6 pupils to be supported through the Career Ready programme. Participation rates of young people from Crieff High School entering into positive destinations continue to rise with almost all (99%) of school leavers progressing into positive destinations from school session 2017/18. This is above their VC, Perth & Kinross, the Regional Improvement Collaborative and National averages.

In the Broad General Education (BGE) there are opportunities for young people to be involved in citizenship activities such as the Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI). The innovative Scotland Week interdisciplinary learning programme is an example of how departments can work together with external partners, highly effectively, to provide rich and meaningful opportunities for young people. Pupils experience personalisation and choice, to lead their own learning and to connect their learning across curricular areas, with their families and to their local and national context. In reviewing the BGE learner journey, the school are now in the position to build on this success and consider curricular learning pathways into the Senior Phase to ensure the entitlement to a broad general curriculum is fully realised, working with parents and pupils to develop a shared understanding of learner progress and assessment.

Young people and parents said that they were satisfied with the wide range of extra curricular and additional opportunities such as trips and excursions offered to young people at Crieff High School. Positive relationships to promote and support achievement were evident between staff and learners. Staff demonstrated a commitment to ensuring the wellbeing of all children; however, there is a need for a more coherent whole school approach. The school have identified this as a next step and should now seek to have a greater focus on health, wellbeing and personalised support moving forward.

Child protection and safeguarding policies are in place which reflect the most recent legislation and are reviewed on a regular basis. Staff have an understanding of child protection procedures and risk assessments are in place, where appropriate to ensure young people are safe and secure whilst at school.

In Crieff High School, respectful and positive relationships are evident between pupils and between staff and pupils. Young people we spoke to said that they are safe, respected and listened to, and that they are known well in school by staff. Pupils said that they are well informed about relationships, internet safety, substance misuse and sexual health through the Personal and Social Education programme. Parents report that they are reasonably confident in their knowledge of how their child is progressing in their learning and that they have access to a wide range of information regarding learning. Parents also indicated that they would welcome an increase in opportunity to engage in dialogue with the school staff about their children's progress more frequently, particularly during S1 and the BGE. They

highlighted the recent Head Teacher's reports as a welcome addition to parental engagement and requested that the school consider further how best to communicate successes to parents who perhaps do not have regular access to social media to ensure all parents are well-informed.

## **LEARNING**

In almost all classes there are positive and strong relationships, the learning environments are welcoming and a wide range of recent pupil work is on display throughout the school. Learners are treated with equality, fairness and respect which creates a positive climate for learning and teaching. Explanations and instructions are clear and they build upon previous learning and real life experiences. In the majority of classes, learning is well planned and sustains pupil motivation and attention. Learners have opportunities to achieve within the activities and in most classes are given effective feedback and praise which progresses their learning and motivates individuals. In the best lessons, learning intentions and success criteria are clear and appropriate, referred to and support young people to achieve. Pace and challenge were appropriate and the learning exciting. There were one or two highly effective examples of active learning with pupils co-creating success criteria with their teachers. In the majority of classes there were relevant links to prior learning. The school now needs to focus on achieving consistency in learning and teaching approaches and set high standards and expectations of excellent relationships, excellent learning and teaching for all.

There is an opportunity for the school to use their current collegiate professional learning arrangements to refresh methodological and pedagogical approaches to learning and teaching, such as co-operative and active learning techniques that promote the development of pupil responsibility and enhance the skills of independent and peer learning and assessment.

It is essential that approaches to the differentiation of tasks and activities for young people are developed further and become evident in classes. This approach will also ensure that the pace of learning responds to the needs of all learners, takes account of individual learning targets and barriers to learning, and is suitably challenging, encouraging learners to achieve to the best of their ability. This should be complemented with professional learning for staff in the design, development and deployment of differentiation activities where required. The school have identified that differentiation by tasks, activities and resources to ensure appropriate pace and challenge for all learners requires specific focus. This approach to more individualised learning planning will also address disengagement and passivity in a few learners which was observed.

Pupils have a range of supports offered to them, including targeted support for social and communication needs. The school have a very good relationship with a local charity who support the school in offering a range of outreach and in-school activities. Across the school, staff have been trained in restorative approaches, and a number of staff have been trained in self-regulation. Pupils and staff involved report this is helping to improve relationships across the school. The school have a range of universal support on offer to pupils including the Crieff High awards, Mentors Against Violence and peer tutoring. Staff have had access to a range of professional learning opportunities such as Adverse Childhood Experiences, CAMHS mental health and Pivotal Education. Staff report this has been highly valued and has led to changes in approaches by many staff. The PSE curriculum offers a range of programmes and courses from S1 through to S6; this should now be reviewed and updated.

The school provides a useful 'Summary of Information' for staff summarising the identified needs of individuals. This could be further improved by describing how barriers to learning

manifest themselves for the individual pupil and the specific strategies that will allow the individual to access learning and achieve success.

Staff should ensure young people as individual learners are central to their own classroom planning and that young people have a voice in discussions and decisions that will affect them.

Every young person has been assigned a key adult in school however not all of the young people spoken to were able to name the person they would go to if they needed help. The school should review their approaches to ensure that all pupils have opportunity to review their own learning and plan for next steps with a key adult. Staff know and respond to the individual needs of young people, overall promoting and support their wellbeing however young people said that the experiences of this varies across the school. The school should develop a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all staff in providing both universal and targeted personalised support.

In the support department, positive relationships between staff and learners were evident. Learners benefit from a nurturing and caring approach from staff. Ongoing changes of staff have impacted upon the strategic development of the support provision in the school and a review of the enhanced provision was identified by the school as a next step.

The school work very well with partners to provide support to individuals and offer professional learning to staff. It is the responsibility of all staff to develop their own individual skillset to ensure high quality support entitlements are successfully provided.

## **LEADERSHIP**

Staff, pupils and parents spoken to said that they welcomed the recent increased visibility of the Senior Leadership Team around the school and campus. The SLT, led by the newly appointed Head Teacher have undertaken thorough self-evaluation activities the findings of which were validated by the findings of the Extended Learning & Achievement Visit.

All faculties, departments and key partners make contributions to evaluating the work of the school and are involved in school improvement planning. Pupils, classroom teachers, pupil support assistants and parents feedback suggests that this could be further developed to ensure that school improvement planning and self-evaluation activities are undertaken collaboratively, at all levels, regularly including participation of these key groups in the continuous improvement process. The SLT display a high level of skill in analysing relevant data and look outward, working with colleagues beyond the school to enhance these processes. They are well-placed to ensure this approach is replicated in departments and has an impact on positive outcomes for pupils across achievement and learning.

Some teachers are leading developments within the improvement plan and contribute to and lead collegiate groups and engage in action research activities. There is scope now to develop further professional learning activities to maximise opportunities for leadership for all staff.

Pupils enjoy a range of leadership roles such as Senior Prefect Team which contribute to the work of the school. Most of the young people spoken to displayed a good understanding of the skills they are developing and were articulate about their experiences as learners. There are opportunities to further develop leadership throughout the learner journey, creating opportunities for pupils to build skills in independent learning, leading their own learning and that of others and to develop resilience and confidence as a result.

The school has recently produced a Positive Behaviour Management policy and have been working to improve consistency and expectations of young people based on recent educational research. This policy could be developed further to define a common approach to relationships in line with the self-regulation and restorative approaches work undertaken in the school.

### **Conclusion**

Crieff High School within Strathearn Community Campus provides a safe, respectful and positive learning environment in which young people can learn and achieve with success. The leadership team and staff demonstrated a collective commitment to working together with young people and their families to get it right for all children and young people.

### **Strengths**

- The leadership of the Head Teacher and SLT and the staff's commitment to ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people
- Positive relationships, a mutual respect between staff and pupils was evident in attractive and welcoming learning environment
- The positive impact on school ethos of a programme of professional learning with a focus on relationships and behaviour
- Senior Phase curricular pathways. The Senior Phase curriculum offers a diverse range of learner pathways and experiences including a range of vocational qualifications, which support the development of skills for learning, life and work and lead to positive destinations
- Robust tracking and monitoring processes are in place in the senior phase to ensure continuous focus on the raising of attainment.

We discussed with the Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team how they might continue to improve the school in light of their own self evaluation and feedback from the Extended Learning and Achievement Visit team. The following areas for improvement were agreed:

- During session 2019-20 the school should work collaboratively across the school to share and apply consistently the identified good practice in learning and teaching
- In the session 2019-20 take forward a collaborative approach to self-evaluation and school improvement planning across the whole school involving parents, pupils, staff and partners to ensure judgements are robust and evidence-based
- Work with parents and pupils to develop a shared understanding of learner progress and assessment, particularly in the Broad, General Education
- By June 2020 drive forward strategies to improve numeracy outcomes for young people
- In session 2019-20 review approaches to universal and targeted support, wellbeing and inclusion including a focus on differentiation, with a view to implementation in session 2020/21

As part of the normal ELAV follow up procedures, ECS officers will return within a year to evaluate the school's progress towards taking forward the recommendations for improvement.

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