

Your Ref:

Our Ref: DISTRICT\INFO\QI INDICES\HMI\STEWARTRY\
DALBEATTIE HIGH SCHOOL\LET002-CG\EB\RL

22 January 2014

Education Services

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To:

**All Parents and Carers of Pupils at
Dalbeattie High School**

Any enquiries please contact

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Dear Parent / Carer

**PROGRESS REPORT FOLLOWING HMI INSPECTION OF
DALBEATTIE HIGH SCHOOL – 18 DECEMBER 2012**

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of Education Services, Dumfries & Galloway Council, I am pleased to inform you of the progress made by Dalbeattie High School following publication of its HMI report on 18 December 2012. You may recall that the HMI report noted two main areas for improvement and, following discussion with the school, I have provided below an update for each, describing some of the key actions overtaken by the school.

1. Provide more consistent approaches for young people to become independent and confident learners.

Over the last year the school has been developing a number of ways of broadening the experiences of the learners to support them in becoming more confident and independent learners. Changes in classroom methodology has led to a more consistent approach being applied to learning practices across the school, with a whole school approach being developed to encourage pupils to become more reflective in their learning. The 'how' and the 'what' they are learning has become a clear focus of development in the classroom, with learning intentions now being routinely shared with pupils. Greater use of peer and self-evaluation, together with the sharing of success criteria, are helping young people develop better skills as independent learners.

Classroom observations show that almost all pupils are motivated and eager participants in the school. The focus of observations this year has been on pupil reflection on learning, Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and Active/Independent Learning. Since the school's inspection, a more consistent approach to the quality of learning and feedback has been observed with learners now much more actively involved in their learning. All courses have been developed to be stimulating, challenging and enjoyable with staff increasingly using a

wide range of teaching and learning techniques to promote independent learning. Through increased differentiation, the school is supporting and challenging almost all of its learners and responding to and meeting their needs. This has been developed through the sharing and building on effective practice across the school.

A number of staff are actively involved in the learning and teaching group which meets on a regular basis to share good practice. This alongside the calendar of professional learning development opportunities ensures all staff have the opportunity to develop / reflect on their professional practice. The broadening of the use of learning logs is also helping the young people reflect on a daily basis (lesson by lesson) on their learning. This practice is however still developing, with further work being required through Personal Support to support pupils regarding the 'reflection' nature of the log. Developing this will help the learner focus better on their next steps for learning, reflect better on what they have been learning, as well as accept greater responsibility for their own learning.

Over the past year, curricular options have been extended further in S1 and S3 curriculum to ensure personalisation and choice for all learners and provide an opportunity to deliver the entitlement of personal support. In S1 for example, all pupils benefit from a range of short courses helping develop skills in health and wellbeing, enterprise and citizenship beyond the classroom as well as confidence and independence. Consideration is now being given to how this might be incorporated into the S2 curriculum to enable this National entitlement to be fully met in the coming session. A Short Life Working Group have met several times looking at ways to take this initiative forward.

The school continues to be innovative in the opportunities it provides for its young people to develop their skills for learning, life and work. This work is enhanced by the partnership work the school is currently developing with local businesses and community initiatives. These opportunities will help take learning beyond the class bringing learning to life helping to make it more relevant.

The school is developing pupil leadership through the S6 mentoring project, and year group representation on the pupil council, where learning and teaching will be a regular feature on the agenda. Assemblies are organised and delivered by pupils and their representatives have active links with the SMT and the Parent Council who actively encourage the pupil voice to be heard on school and pupil priorities. Other leadership opportunities include opportunities through charity and volunteer work and in many sporting opportunities.

2. Continue to develop the curriculum to ensure it meets all young people's needs and entitlements.

Following the school's inspection and the recommendations made, good progress has been made in developing the rationale and design of the curriculum with the courses and programmes offered now more effectively meeting the needs of all learners. In the broad general education, S1 – 3, courses have been developed further to help meet the key CfE entitlements. Effective detailed planning for these courses is now helping ensure better coherence and progression through the curricular areas and beyond. This, alongside the redesign of the S2 /3 curriculum, is supporting learners to better build on prior learning; provide depth and challenge and progress more effectively towards the senior phase. Staff are now much more confident in their use of the E's and O's and are using them effectively to plan learning. This supports the wide range of transition work which is now well established with the school's cluster primaries. Further work in relation to the use of P7

profiles, standardised assessments will continue to help staff to build on prior learning in Primary and to monitor pupil progress in S1 across all curricular areas further enhancing young people's learning.

All staff have benefited from a more collegiate approach to professional learning, with meetings and moderation activities with colleagues from in school and across the cluster helping to develop a better understanding of expected standards. Changes in teaching methodology, including more evidence of collaborative learning across the school has resulted in the learners becoming more actively involved in their own learning. This is helping to develop more challenging learning experiences and learner confidences in the core areas of literacy and numeracy, with learners now showing that they are better able to express their opinions, explain and develop their understanding of class activities.

In the senior phase, the school continues to refine its plans and provision, building on current good practice as well as established partnerships with Dumfries and Galloway College, Castle Douglas High School and other local community initiatives and businesses. This is enabling the flexibilities and range of the new qualifications to be fully explored and a range of different learner progression routes to be devised.

In developing the breadth and depth of the both the BGE S1 / 3 and Senior Phase curriculum, work is continuing to take place to further develop the range and variety of interdisciplinary activities and opportunities for personal achievement. These opportunities are enhancing the pupil experience and are helping learners make connections between and beyond the traditional curricular areas. Pupil involvement in the wider school curriculum continues to increase with a wide range opportunities provided for pupils to gain recognition beyond traditional qualifications. Notable recent examples include the school's involvement in the global *Da Vinci Challenge* and the UWS enterprising challenge, the number of young people involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, nationally recognised Saltire Awards, Leadership and other community volunteering activities. An S6 Leadership programme is also helping those involved develop valuable transferrable skills with the S1 pupils benefiting from involvement in a senior pupil mentoring programme.

The school has recently taken the lead in attempting to establish closer links with Community Learning and Development to develop programmes to enhance skill development and employability to support current good practice in school and provide opportunities for further accreditation of the wide range activities the young people are involved in. This area will continue to be the focus of further development as the school and CLD work towards more effective partnership working in the coming months.

Yours sincerely

Colin Grant
Director, Education Services