

Education & Learning Directorate

The Bridge
Glasgow Road
Dumfries
DG2 9AW

Your Ref:

Our Ref: DISTRICT\INFO\QI\INDICES\ES\REPORTS\
A&E\ANNAN ACADEMY\LET001-JB\EB\RL

22 January 2021

To:

**All Parents and Carers of Pupils at
Annan Academy**

Any enquiries please contact:

Jim Brown

Tel: 030 33 33 3000

E-mail: james.brown@dumgal.gov.uk

Dear Parent / Carer

LETTER REPORTING ON PROGRESS OF ANNAN ACADEMY SINCE THE EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT OF 5 MARCH 2019

Annan Academy was inspected by Education Scotland in January 2019. The inspection focussed on leadership of change; learning, teaching and assessment; raising attainment and achievement; and ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion. The school received a rating of 'good' for leadership of change and 'satisfactory' across the other three Quality Indicators.

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of the Education and Learning Directorate of Dumfries and Galloway Council, I write to inform you of the progress made in the school since the publication of the inspection report in March 2019. The report highlighted four main aspects for development. This letter sets out actions taken by the school in addressing these points.

Senior staff should work closely to lead and manage the changes needed to raise the aspirations of some young people and to improve outcomes for all young people. Staff should continue to increase their own skills and knowledge to make sure they can be fully involved in moving the school forward.

Senior leaders have completed professional learning which includes Excellence in Headship, Into Headship, Coaching Approaches and Senior Phase Development to increase their own skills to make sure they can be fully involved in the process of moving

the school forward. Teaching staff continue to develop their skills and knowledge with the Visible Learning programme focusing on improving learning and teaching. The impact of this in the classroom has been that an increasing number of young people are able to articulate what they are learning and why. They can now recognise how they are learning and the strategies they use to learn and ultimately, they can articulate their next steps in learning. The school is moving from a teacher-led learning experience to one where young people are developing more responsibility for their own learning.

To raise aspirations and improve outcomes for all young people, a variety of approaches have been introduced including targeted work with partners to ensure equity of outcomes. This includes ongoing partnerships with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Smarter2gether, Secondary Inclusion and the Looked after Children (LAC) team. In the context of the COVID epidemic response, staff have developed a range of blended learning approaches – online and face-to-face - to ensure engagement of young people. Next steps will be to review the impact of these interventions and identify priorities to improve further.

A number of staff continue to embark on the Education and Learning led '*Introduction to School Leadership*' programme. This course includes up to date educational theory and practice in relation to leadership and management and also develops the understanding and application of self-evaluation for school improvement. This has encouraged more staff to take a more active involvement in moving the school forward.

Some staff have completed Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Ambassador training and gained SCQF Ambassador status. Through twilight delivery sessions, this will improve the wider staff's knowledge of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) courses.

Develop a shared understanding with all staff of what high-quality learning and teaching looks like in Annan Academy. Build on the highly effective practice in a few areas of the school to improve the quality of learning and teaching and ensure that this is applied consistently across all curricular areas. Across the school there is a need to improve the pace and challenge in learning for young people.

The school is continuing to build a culture of shared understanding and of collective responsibility, including improving pace, breadth and challenge in the classroom through a review of the Learning and Teaching policy. The school is now in the process of finalising this refreshed policy. This is leading to a shared understanding of what successful learning looks like across the school, and the development of a shared language for learning. Staff, pupils and parents are in agreement that good learner engagement is a key characteristic of what makes a good learner. This session, staff have undertaken a focus on improving learner engagement and a working party is leading developments in this area. Part of this work so far has included the participation of learners in focus groups, including some pupils from the Primary sector, to gain a better understanding of engagement from the learners' point of view. A number of staff are now using the Leuven scale which allows teachers to measure learners' 'emotional wellbeing' and 'involvement' and so help track and improve learner engagement.

Staff have undertaken professional enquiry projects as part of Visible Learning and shared results with colleagues at in-service and whole staff meetings. Sharing good practice in learning and teaching is taking place across Faculties and the whole school. This includes in-house teacher collaboration on-line platform for professional discussion. During recent whole-school self-evaluation, there was evidence that learning and teaching has improved since the inspection. Despite the current COVID situation, the school's focus remains on ensuring that pupils experience quality learning and teaching to enthuse, motivate and empower all learners.

Approaches to promoting wellbeing, inclusion and equality should be improved to ensure that all young people are able to reflect on their learning, development and progress. Develop a more integrated approach to supporting young people to learn and achieve. Support all staff to recognise and better meet the needs of all learners.

The school's approach to wellbeing is underpinned by the growing commitment of young people, staff, parents and partners to the shared values of the school community. Senior leaders recognise that positive relationships are central to developing a whole school approach to wellbeing. The school has made progress in developing a shared understanding of wellbeing across the whole school community. The wellbeing indicators are being used more consistently to support young people. Young people are more confident and able to self-evaluate their wellbeing by using the wellbeing wheel to support them. This progress is also evident in the attendance figures which have improved. Exclusion figures were much reduced in 2019/20. The referrals to partners have increased as young people are more able to open up about their wellbeing and ask for support.

The young people have frequent and regular opportunities to discuss their learning and development with their key adult through daily dedicated tutor time in conjunction with a dedicated Personal and Social Education (PSE) lesson with that same tutor. Through dialogue and discussion, as part of the approach to personal support in all year groups, young people are now beginning to know themselves better as learners by making effective use of feedback to review progress, set learning targets and plan next steps. This has been supported through learning opportunities for all teaching staff, including professional research projects. One such project was to introduce metacognitive questions to a class to try and develop pupil engagement with their learning, based on the questions, "What did we do today? Why did we do it? What did I learn? How will I use this?" This has resulted in pupils having a better understanding of where they are in their learning and how to move forward.

The needs of young people who require additional support in their learning are identified well. Needs, and how they can be supported, are shared with staff across the school through a useful confidential database. All staff are aware of young people who have experienced care. Strategies are focussed on improving learning and teaching methodologies and developing literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and employability skills - leading to positive sustained destinations.

Continue to improve attainment and achievement for all young people to ensure that they attain and achieve as highly as possible. Continue to develop and modify approaches to checking the progress of young people across all stages so that teachers can plan appropriately to ensure young people make best possible progress.

The school continues to work together with its cluster primaries to moderate pupil work to ensure consistency of standards and progress from Primary to Secondary. This then ensures there is no lowering of attainment during the transition process.

Annan Academy has adopted the Education and Learning '*Four Stages of Progress and Achievement*' module in SEEMIS. Through this module staff have a better understanding of pupil progress across all curriculum areas in the broad general education. All teachers understand their important role in working together to benchmark and agree how to describe the progress of learners in the broad general education. A working party is currently gathering evidence from all stakeholders so that a common understanding of progress can be reached. This has the potential to raise attainment and achievement for young people as they begin to fully understand where they are in terms of progress and the next steps needed.

The school's new curricular model has a particular emphasis on providing alternative courses to move away from the solely traditional curriculum offering. This ensures learning pathways for all students are available for example, National Progression Awards and Foundation Apprenticeships. To widen the Senior Phase curriculum offer, Annan Academy is working together with Dumfries and Galloway College and other partners: for example, Scotland's Rural College, Barony Campus; the Open University's Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS); Network East and other secondary schools, Education and Learning, Dumfries and Galloway. In S3, this approach is providing more pathways for students moving into the Senior Phase.

The school continues to adapt its Senior Phase mentoring policy in light of feedback from staff and pupils. In 2019/2020, feedback suggested adapting the mentoring model to target S4 leavers only. In 2020/2021, the feedback suggested a model that is focused on targeted S4 students, identified by staff as being in danger of not achieving in each curricular area. It was agreed that all S5 students would be mentored through study periods.

The school is in the process of developing further its tracking procedures to ensure young people are effectively supported to achieve the best possible attainment and achievement. These tracking procedures are helping to identify groups of pupils who need more support or challenge to ensure the best possible progress is made. Changes have been made to how staff access relevant information to ensure data is used more effectively to monitor learners' progress and support learning and teaching. All teaching staff have access to how a pupil is progressing in all subjects. This is allowing staff to work collegiately to improve outcomes for young people.

The school has made progress in implementing Education Scotland's recommendations and is in a strong position to improve further. I wish to congratulate all within the school community on the progress made over the last two years.

Yours sincerely

Jim Brown
Head of Education (Curriculum & Quality) and Chief Education Officer