

Agenda Item	6
Report No	BIDS/011/20

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Committee

Date: 13 October 2020

Report Title: Education Scotland Activity in Fortrose Academy

Report By: Education Quality Improvement Manager

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the outcomes of the visit by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) to Fortrose Academy from 2nd to 5th December 2019. This HMI visit was a short model inspection. The Head Teacher (HT) at Fortrose Academy is Gavin MacLean who is supported by three Depute Head Teachers (DHTs) one of whom was in an acting role at the time of inspection. This report to committee has been delayed by the Covid-19 situation and the focus on urgent matters at the July committee meeting.

2. Implications

- 2.1 Resource – none
2.2 Legal – none
2.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – none
2.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – none
2.5 Risk – none
2.6 Gaelic – none

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are asked to scrutinise and monitor the Education Scotland reports through this report.

4. Background

4.1 In December 2019, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Fortrose Academy for a short model inspection. The outcome of this inspection, published on the 11th of February 2020, was that the school was evaluated as follows on the two assessed key Quality Indicators from *How good is our school?*, 4th edition:

Learning, teaching and assessment – good
Raising attainment and achievement – good

4.2 The following overall strengths of the school were identified as follows:

1. The calm and purposeful environment for learning which is resulting in young people working very well independently. Young people also play an active role in supporting others in the local community.
2. The highly effective use of digital technology which is enhancing learning experiences for young people across the curriculum.
3. The attainment of young people in National Qualifications. This is consistently in line with or above other schools who have learners with similar needs and backgrounds across Scotland.

4.3 The school was given two key points for action as follows:

1. Ensure learning across the curriculum, particularly from S1 to S3, takes better account of what young people already know through an integrated approach to learning, teaching, assessment and moderation. This should help to ensure that all tasks and activities are better matched to the needs of all young people.
2. Build on existing practice to developing approaches for checking the progress that learners are making, particularly from S1 to S3, to ensure all young people make appropriate progress.

4.4 The conclusion of the HMI team was that they were confident that Fortrose Academy has the capacity to continue to improve and so will make no more visits to the school in connection with this inspection.

4.5 The inspection report, can be found by clicking [this link](#), and a more detailed document, entitled *Summarised Inspection Findings*, can be found by clicking [this link](#). This report outlines the key points made in the latter document under the two key Quality Indicators and identifies additional areas identified by the inspection team as worth sharing more widely (i.e. nationally).

5. QI 2.3 – Learning, teaching and assessment

5.1 The HMI team identified a number of positive features in relation to this quality indicator, and a selection of the key points is as follows:

- Fortrose Academy has a strong culture of learning. Respectful relationships result in a positive ethos and a calm, purposeful learning environment. Young people work very well independently, organise themselves efficiently and demonstrate self-reliance in a variety of contexts.
- In most lessons teachers share effectively the purpose of learning and what successful learning looks like with young people. In all lessons, instructions and explanations are clear. A few teachers are highly skilled in deepening young people's learning through effective questioning.
- Young people's views are sought in a number of ways across the school and they respond well when their views are acted upon. Most young people effectively lead and direct aspects of their own learning and respond well when given opportunities to do so.

- Staff have a good understanding of the needs of young people. These are met well in the majority of lessons.
- Teachers use digital technology highly effectively. This helps young people's independent learning skills develop very well.
- The school, in collaboration with partners, has developed a skills framework for young people, focused on resilience, collaboration, communication, creativity, digital and organisational skills. Young people are beginning to identify and recognise these skills in themselves.
- In the senior phase, almost all young people receive high-quality feedback through learning conversations with their subject teachers. Young people are clear about their strengths and next steps in learning.
- In the senior phase, teachers show a very good understanding of assessment requirements within courses and use approaches that support young people to make progress towards gaining National Qualifications.
- The well-established learning, teaching and assessment working group have developed a very helpful learning, teaching and assessment policy and have led professional learning sessions for staff.

5.2 The HMI team suggested several points for action for the school with key recommendations as follows:

- Teachers should share good practice more widely across the school to increase the range of teaching and learning approaches.
- Teachers need to develop further high-quality plenary sessions, particularly in the broad general education (BGE) phase.
- As planned, teachers should now seek ways to develop further learner participation to allow young people to shape how they learn.
- Teachers should continue to develop a shared understanding of standards so that they are planning activities and tasks set at the right level of difficulty.
- Staff should build on existing good practice in the BGE to ensure that all young people benefit from high quality feedback.
- Teachers now need to use assessment evidence more effectively to inform planning of learning, teaching and assessment. This should ensure all young people make appropriate progress. Teachers need to develop further their understanding of standards and expectations for Curriculum for Excellence levels within the BGE.

6. QI 3.2 - Raising attainment and achievement.

6.1 The HMI team identified a number of positive features in relation to this quality indicator, and a selection of the key points is as follows (full attainment details are in the *Summarised Inspection Findings*):

- In the BGE, the school has sustained strong attainment in CfE levels over the past three years.
- Teachers use Scottish National Standardised Assessment results, a range of internal class tests and National Benchmarks to support their professional judgement of achievement of a level. Teachers, in partnership with their associated primary colleagues, participate in local authority moderation activities to help improve their understanding of standards.
- Senior leaders use attainment data to identify young people who would benefit from targeted support in areas of literacy and numeracy. This is supporting young people to access the curriculum through for example, focused work on spelling and reading strategies.

- Most young people are attaining well in literacy and numeracy by the time of leaving school.
- Senior leaders have recently developed a whole-school approach to monitoring and tracking young people's progress. Senior leaders collect data across all departments at specific times over the course of a year. They use this data to identify who is working beyond expectations, at expected standards and those not meeting expected standards. Senior leaders identify interventions to support learners based on this data.
- In almost all measures of Senior phase attainment, young people achieve outcomes that are better than or significantly better than the virtual comparator. This is a positive and improving picture, especially in S5.
- Senior leaders continue to strive to develop further the curriculum offer for the highest attaining young people in S6.
- The majority of young people are developing confidence and skills for learning, life and work through a wide range of experiences. The work of the Highlife Highland Youth Development Team enables young people to volunteer in a diverse range of settings both in school and in the community. This contributes to young people having a strong sense of community. The school celebrates young people's successes and achievements well on social media channels and in school displays.
- The active schools coordinators are proactive in encouraging young people to participate in a variety of sporting opportunities. This allows young people to develop their skills in health and wellbeing and sport, and to attain accreditation. The school has attained a sportscotland Gold School Sport Award.
- Staff have a very good knowledge of young people and their individual circumstances. They ensure equity of access to all aspects of school life by overcoming barriers to learning.
- Young people are encouraged to consider a range of options by school staff and Skills Development Scotland coaches. Almost all young people between 2013/14 and 2017/18 move into positive initial destinations after school. The majority of young people go to higher or further education on leaving school.

6.2 The HMI team suggested several points for action for the school with key recommendations as follows:

- Senior leaders recognise they need to ensure that assessment, monitoring and tracking in the BGE is more consistently robust across departments to enable learners to make choices for study in the Senior Phase that are more informed.
- There is a need to monitor and evaluate more closely the impact of interventions adopted at departmental level for those young people identified at tracking points.
- Staff should develop the quality of conversations with learners about their achievement. This should help young people recognise the value of them and to develop further their transferrable skills.
- Staff should also ensure that the data they gather records young people's participation in all activities outwith school. Senior leaders, working with community partners, should continue to develop opportunities for wider achievement for young people who may be at risk of not participating.

7. Practice worth sharing more widely.

7.1 The HMI team identified the following as practice worth sharing more widely (this identified practice is shared nationally via the *Summarised inspection Findings* document).

- Partnership working, resulting in transformative changes for individual young people.
- Young people supporting others in the community, for example through participation in programmes such as Black Isle Cares, allowing young people to develop empathy and resilience.
- Young people developing citizenship skills through engaging with community councils and the Wellbeing in the Black Isle Group, helping to develop young people's wellbeing and allowing them to take more responsibility in the community.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 As mentioned above, the HMI team concluded that the school has the capacity to make good progress and to continue to improve. There will be no further HMI visits to the school in connection with this inspection.

Designation: Education Quality Improvement Manager

Date: 27 September 2020

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Background Papers: Education Scotland February 2020 inspection letter [here](#) and Education Scotland February 2020 Summarised Inspection Findings [here](#).