

# "Working together to inspire learning and achievement in Highland Communities"



## Standards and Quality Report

The Highland Council  
Education, Culture and Sport Service

Dingwall Academy  
July 2014

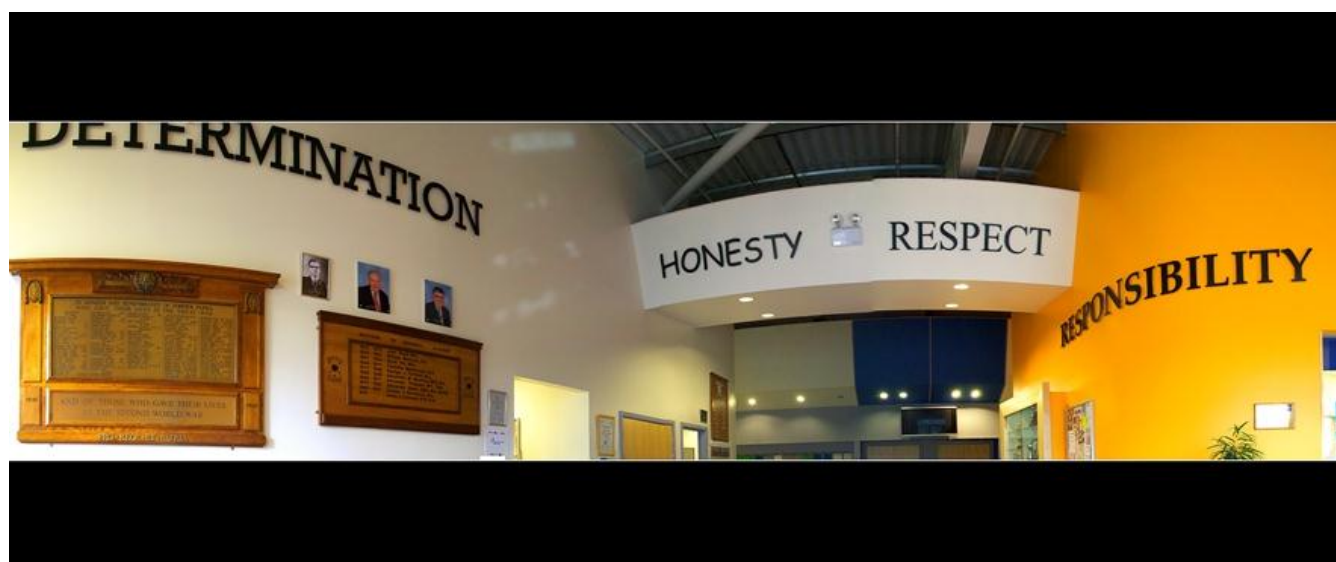
### Our school vision, values and aims

#### Vision

A school with a sense of community – a school where, by taking a collective responsibility, pupils and staff have the opportunity to achieve extraordinary things.

#### Values

Respect  
Responsibility  
Honesty  
Determination



#### Aims

The aims of the school are to provide pupils with the opportunities and experiences that will allow them to develop the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.

## The Core Areas of our Practice

This report summarises the strengths of our school, our recent improvements and what needs to improve further. We gather this information throughout the year in a variety of ways so we can make sure our report is as accurate as possible. We take time to compare what we do with national examples of best practice. We visit each others' classes to share standards in learning and teaching. We look at children and young people's work to see how they are progressing. We cross mark work. We make use of factual data and information including attainment results responding and adapting our teaching in line with children's needs. We assess using our own expertise, standardised testing, cross marking and results tracking. Children peer assess and self assess. We gather the views of children, parents, staff and members of the local community. We use all of this information to arrive at our view of the quality of education we provide.

### Our Key Strengths

- Positive relationships between staff, pupils and parents
- The commitment of staff to developing courses and materials for the new National Qualifications
- Attainment at Higher Level
- Curriculum Structure
- Support for new staff
- Partnership working

### Our Improvements Last Session

- Introduction of monitoring and tracking system
- Increased number of classroom observations
- Introduction of senior phase option form
- More strategic approach to self-evaluation
- Increased number of partnership agreements

### Our Priorities For Improvement for Next Session

- Supporting staff in the continued development of new National Qualifications
- Supporting pupils and parents with new National Qualifications and in particular the assessment demands.
- Recognising, capturing and celebrating wider achievements
- Increased pupil responsibility for learning
- Increased involvement of pupil voice
- Continued self- evaluation, including professional update.

## 1. How well do young people learn and achieve?

### 1.1.Improvements in performance

- *Standards of attainment over time*
- *Overall quality of learners' achievement*
- *Impact of the school improvement plan*

### 2.1 Learners' experiences

- *The extent to which learners are motivated and actively involved in their own learning and development*

### Improvements in performance

#### Strengths and recent areas of improvement

Performance at Higher Level was particularly strong with 15.1% of S5 pupils achieving 5 Higher Passes. 7 S5 pupils achieved A passes in all 5 Highers. Pupils achieved particularly well in Higher Business Management and Higher History.

In S4 pupils sat the new National 5 examinations for the first time, it is therefore difficult to make comparisons with previous years. There were some outstanding results with 76 S4 pupils achieving at least 5 passes at National 5. 8 pupils achieved A passes in all National 5s. Pupils achieved particularly well in National 5 Art & Design, Computing Science, Mathematics and Health & Food Technology.

#### Areas for further development

- Those pupils who sat National 5 examinations did extremely well. However the number of pupils being presented for National 5 was significantly less than the numbers presented in previous years for Standard Grade Credit and Intermediate 2. We need to consider how entry levels for different subjects compare with National Entry levels and to then review presentation policy.
- All Principal Teachers need to become familiar with the new exam analysis programme 'Insight.'
- Monitoring and Tracking used to inform target setting.
- Provide additional mentoring for identified S3 pupils as they move towards the senior phase.

### Learners' Experiences

#### Strengths and recent areas of improvement

Almost all staff took part in classroom observations. Classroom observations show that the majority of pupils are motivated and keen to do well. In the majority of classrooms there is good classroom management with pupils on task and engaged in their lessons. Staff work extremely hard to produce course materials that are relevant, challenging and engaging.

An evaluation with S1 parents showed that almost all parents either agreed or strongly agreed that their child enjoys being at school.

Monitoring and Tracking was introduced throughout the school. All pupils in S1 – S3 had learning

conversations as part of tutor time, and a number of staff also had individual learning conversations with pupils. Pupils in S1 and S2 reflected on their learning based on the 4 capacities, and S3 pupils completed a learning profile.

An information evening was held with S1 parents to highlight the shift from directed homework to pupils taking more responsibility for learning. Almost all parents who attended said that they found the evening very useful.

S4 pupils found the assessment demands of the new qualifications particularly challenging and welcomed the opportunity to take part in a seminar with the Tree of Knowledge.

The system for appointing prefects has been revised, with pupils being interviewed for the positions of Head Boy and Head Girl. Prefects took part in a training session – most of those of attended found the session excellent and suggested that further events and activities take place during the session.

Pupil focus groups were very positive about the school but also suggested some areas for improvement. Pupils described themselves as feeling safe in school; the majority of pupils enjoyed break and lunchtime and said that the canteen food was much better than in primary schools.

Pupils continue to have the opportunity to experience a wide range of activities, and the school is extremely fortunate to have so many staff prepared to give so much of their time. Sporting activities include football, rugby, hockey, athletics, cross country and mountain biking. The Drama Club continues to enjoy considerable success and there have also been theatre trips organised to Eden Court. S3 pupils took part in a camping expedition to the Alladale Estate. S2 pupils are given the opportunity to help with the P7 transition by becoming 'Super Citizens' and a number of S3 pupils helped at the 'Friendly Games' with St Clements School. The Social Subjects department organised trips to Culloden and to the Scottish Parliament. The Art and Music departments organised a trip to Glasgow. The Maths department gave pupils the opportunity to take part in the Maths Challenge, and a number of pupils were also given the opportunity to take part in the Bridge to Employment initiative. At the end of the session all pupils were given the opportunity to take part in Activity Days and there were trips abroad to Spain, Belgium, Germany and Romania.

All these events and achievements are detailed in the monthly newsletter.

<http://www.dingwallacademy.com/newsletters>

### **Areas for further development**

- The information shared with parents during information evenings needs to be shared with all staff.
- Following the Tree of Knowledge event 52% of S4 pupils said that they only studied when they had set homework. An evaluation from parents following the S4 Study Information evening showed that although most found the evening very useful they would welcome more advice on how to support pupils with their studying; they would also like the format of the evening to be changed so that pupils attended too. These changes will be made next session, and study skills and learning logs are being introduced in S1 – S3.

- Pupils need to be given more opportunities to express their opinions through pupil focus groups.
- A formal system for recording pupil achievements to be introduced and used during tutor time.
- Self- Evaluation showed that although pupils were aware of the monthly newsletter a significant number did not read it each month. We need to ensure that the newsletter is read by the target audience.

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

### 5.1 The Curriculum

- *The rationale and design of the curriculum*
- *The development of the curriculum*
- *Programmes and courses*
- *Transitions*

### 5.3 Meeting learning needs

- *Tasks, activities and resources*
- *Identification of learning needs*
- *The roles of teachers and specialist staff*
- *Meeting and implementing the requirements of legislation*

### The Curriculum

#### **Strengths and recent areas of improvement**

The staff are all committed to ensuring that pupils receive the best possible curriculum experience and have all worked extremely hard to produce materials for the new national qualifications. This has placed considerable pressure on staff and pupils.

In S3 pupils continue to follow a Broad General Education and make 9 subject choices based on the curriculum areas. Last session Dance and Drama were included on the option form for the first time. In S1 pupils experienced 4 languages – French, German, Spanish and Gaelic. Pupils then select a language to continue with in S2. Pupils in S1 and S2 continue to follow 4 Interdisciplinary courses throughout the session. This includes British Sign Language and the Literacy Hub. In S2 pupils now receive 2 periods of music and 1 period of art.

Pupils in S4/S5 and S6 are all now part of the senior phase and choose 5 or 6 subjects from the senior phase option form. This option form includes a number of new courses including Scottish Studies and Skillsforce. The senior phase option form also includes a number of elective courses.

Pupils are given the opportunity to experience a number of alternative curriculum packages. A number of pupils take part in the Forest Skills and Rural Skills. We are extremely grateful to the community and business partners that allow these courses to run. Most departments now have a partnership that involves either guest speakers visiting the school, or pupils taking part in an off-site visit. The CDT department developed a partnership agreement with William Gray Construction and the Business and Computer Education Department worked in partnership with Aberdeen University. During the session

the parent council organised a partnership evening where local businesses and organisations were invited into the school. This proved very successful and has resulted in a number of new partnerships.

### **Areas for further development**

- Consider vocational provision in the senior phase
- Review of senior phase option form
- Review of Broad General Education including S1 language programme and interdisciplinary courses.

### Meeting learning needs

### **Strengths and recent areas of improvement**

In the S1 parental evaluation all of the replies said that the school reports gave useful information on their child's progress and that they felt comfortable contacting the school if they had a concern. Parents and pupils find support staff very approachable.

Personal Support is provided to all pupils in S1 – S3 through a period of tutor time. All pupils receive 1 period of Personal and Social Education each week. Monitoring and Tracking was introduced throughout the school and used to inform learning conversations and to highlight pupils who were working well or giving cause for concern.

The school has specialist provision for Behaviour Support, Autism and Hearing Impaired. The Hearing Impaired base has had very positive exposure at a National level with pupils visiting the Scottish Parliament, Heriot Watt University and the Edinburgh Festival to raise awareness of Deaf Education. A significant amount of work has taken place in both the Behaviour and Autism bases to improve the quality of provision in these areas.

The quality of the support provided by the Pupil Support Assistants is recognised and valued.

Some pupils find lunchtime quite long and room 11 is made available for those pupils who find breaks and lunchtimes difficult.

The school works in partnership with a number of external agencies to enhance the curriculum provision for some pupils with particular needs. Calman Trust, The meeting Place, Day 1 have all provided much valued support.

### **Areas for further development**

- A number of parents and pupils are still finding aspects of the new exam structure confusing. We need to improve the information provided and in particular consider how we support and inform pupils at times of option choices.
- Transfer of ASN information during P7 – S1 transition.
- Consider roles and responsibilities of Learning Support teachers and PSA staff.
- Improve resources and materials available for Learning Support.

### 3. How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

#### 5.9 Improvements through self-evaluation

- *Commitment to self-evaluation*
- *Management of self-evaluation*
- *School improvement*

#### Improvement through self- evaluation

##### **Strengths and recent areas of improvement**

A self-evaluation calendar and summary were issued to all staff at the start of the session. We are improving our approach to self -evaluation and routinely ask for feedback from pupils and parents. A summary of any evaluations carried out are shared with staff, this includes impact and action points. The most recent parental questionnaire had a disappointing response with only 9% of parents replying. The parent council suggested that a small number of questions are included on report card reply slips. This was trialled with the S1 report card and 53% of parents responded.

From August 2014 all teaching staff will be required to take part in the GTC process of Professional Update. This will require staff to plan and record their professional learning. Training has been provided and will continue to be provided to all staff on this. All SMT have now completed their Annual Professional Review and this will be rolled out to other staff during the session.

All teaching staff are required to take part in 2 classroom observations during the course of the session.

The observation sheet used for this has now been amended to include a follow up action point.

Pupil opinion has been sought on a number of areas including school values, impact of newsletter, S1 transition experience and prefect training.

##### **Areas for further development**

- More evaluative approach to Department Improvement Plans
- Further advice and support on how to give feedback during classroom observations
- Increased opportunity for pupil voice