

"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 2015

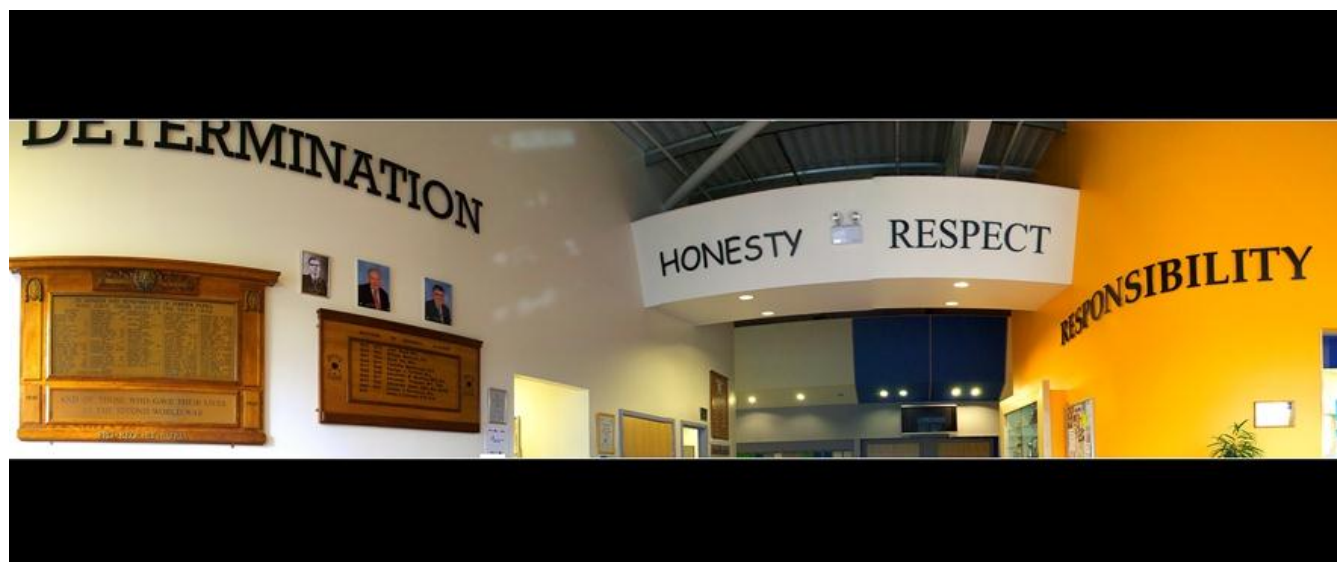
Our school vision, values and aims

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.**
- **Staff engagement with the new qualifications.**
- **Quality and range of pupil experiences.**
- **Behaviour of pupils.**
- **Communication with parents and community.**

Our Improvements Last Session

- **Staff use of SEEMiS.**
- **Promoting and celebrating pupil achievements.**
- **Quality of House Tutor provision.**
- **Pupils taking increased responsibility for learning.**
- **Helping pupils to manage and cope with assessment demands.**

Our Priorities For Improvement for Next Session

- **Monitoring and Tracking in the Broad General Education.**
- **Further developing pupil responsibility for learning.**
- **Parental engagement – with a focus on learning.**
- **Attainment in S4.**
- **Use of ICT to support learning.**
- **Working towards Developing Scotland's Young Workforce targets.**
- **A return to basics – attendance, uniform and overall standards.**

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

In S4, 30% of pupils achieved at least 5 passes at National 5. At National 5 there were particularly good results in Art & Design, Business Management, Computing Science, English, Health & Food Technology, Music and Physical Education.

In S5 and S6 departments were given the opportunity of moving to the new Higher or remaining with the 'old Higher' for one last session. In S5, 12% of pupils achieved 5 Higher passes, with 8 pupils achieving A passes in 5 Highers. There were particularly good results in Accounting, Administration, Art, Biology, Computing Science, History, Modern Studies, Music and Philosophy.

The new assessment arrangements have proved particularly challenging for both staff and pupils. Curriculum for Excellent set out to reduce the assessment burden and it is a major cause for concern that this has not been delivered.

In addition to SQA presentations the school has been working to increase the number of pupils presented for alternative awards. All S6 prefects undertook leadership training, as did those senior pupils involved in the P7 transitions days. A group of S4 pupils successfully piloted an employability course and as part of this gained an ASDAN award. A group of senior pupils also received their ASDAN work experience award.

An evaluation with S5 parents showed that almost all parents either agreed or strongly agreed that their child's learning was progressing well.

Areas for further development

- A number of subjects need to consider presentation levels in S4, and in particular the number of pupils being presented for National 4 and National 5.
- All Principal Teachers to receive further training in the use of the exam analysis programme 'Insight.'
- Making more effective use of data to monitor progress and set targets.
- Continue to develop study skills and revision techniques.

Learners' Experiences

Strengths and recent areas of improvement

All staff are required to take part in classroom observations. Classroom observations show that the majority of pupils are motivated, well behaved 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. In response to previous self-evaluation – a booklet was produced by staff to help with the observation process.

S3 pupil evaluations showed that almost all pupils enjoy learning at school. A similar evaluation exercise carried out with S5 showed that although the majority still enjoy learning, the overall percentage drops.

Coping with assessment demands has been highlighted by pupils as a particular area of concern. To help with this an assessment calendar was produced showing assessment times for all subjects. Although this did not lessen assessment demands, it did help pupils and parents plan and prepare.

All pupils in S1 – S3 were issued with Learning Logs. The main aim was to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and to provide a link between class, house tutor and home. Pupil evaluations show that the learning logs were most effective in S1. They were valued less by the older pupils. An S3 pupil focus group has now provided feedback on how the learning log might be improved and this revised version will be issued next session. The majority of pupils in S1 and S2 have discussed their learning log with someone at home, this number was less in S3.

An information evening for S1 parents called 'Don't you have any homework?' was held in November. All parents who attended found the evening useful. In response to previous feedback, S1 pupils attended the evening along with their parents.

An information evening for parents of pupils in the senior phase was held in January. The feedback from the evening was very positive; however a number suggested that the evening be held earlier in the session.

Pupils at Dingwall Academy are fortunate to be given the opportunity to take part in a wide range of learning experiences. This range of experiences is delivered by an exceptional staff prepared to give so much of their time to provide a quality experience. We recognise and value all the different types of learning that take place. Pupils in S1 – S3 were encouraged to record this learning during House Tutor time. A system for capturing and recording wider achievements has been devised, next session senior 'achievement buddies' will be used to maintain this achievement record.

Extra-curricular sporting activities include football, rugby, hockey, cross country, athletics and cycling. The PE department delivers a range of inter-house competitions, pupil participation in these competitions has increased and at Sports Day this year an impressive 278 pupils entered. Inter-house competition is also promoted through PSE and House Tutor; all S2 pupils competed in the House Tutor inter-house challenge. The Drama Club enjoys considerable success and this year presented 'Private Peaceful.' They also competed in the One Act Drama Festival reaching the regional finals. The school participated in the 'Rock Challenge' initiative and qualified for the Scottish Finals.

The English and Languages departments organised a number of trips to Eden Court Theatre. There have been a number of highly successful residential trips including an Art and Music trip to Glasgow, A Social Subjects visit to Edinburgh and a Physical Education trip to Manchester. During the summer two senior

pupil groups set off on overseas expeditions, one group to South Africa and the other to Tanzania. Again, we are extremely grateful to all staff who give their time to organise these trips and provide such memorable experiences.

The English department organised a project 'We are Writers' where pupils were given the opportunity to contribute to a book that was then published and sold. Over 500 pupils contributed to this.

Pupils are given a number of leadership opportunities including S6 Prefects, Subject Buddies, Bus Monitors, helping with P7 transition, S3 interim Prefects and S2 Super Citizens. Pupil focus groups were used to gather pupil views on specific areas including library use, litter and learning logs.

During the session the school organised its first ever Spring Fair. This was hugely successful and was a wonderful example of school, parent and community partnership. Planning for the Fair was an integral part of the S2 House Tutor course and other departments and school clubs were also involved with the day. Evaluation with S2 pupils showed that the majority enjoyed being involved with the Spring Fair.

A group of senior pupils took part in the 'Get to Know Your Techno' initiative, where they were trained to provide advice and support to Senior Citizens using portable devices.

Another evaluation with pupils showed that they did not enjoy the format of assemblies; they would like assemblies to include more variety and pupil involvement.

All events and achievements are detailed in the monthly newsletter. The newsletter is emailed out to parents and can also be accessed via the school website

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

Evaluation last session showed that not all pupils and parents were engaging with the school newsletter. A number of changes have been introduced and the newsletter is now read by nearly all families.

To further raise the profile of the school and to promote achievements the school now has a Facebook page. This has proved very successful with many posts reaching in excess of 1000 people.

Pupils and staff involve themselves with a wide range of fund raising activities including the sponsored walk, Red Nose Day, Children in Need and Teenage Cancer Trust. Dingwall Academy is the top fundraising school for Teenage Cancer Trust in Britain, and we are extremely proud of our relationship with this charity.

Areas for further development

- **Increase pupil and parental engagement with the learning log.**
- **Provide more online support and guidance to help parents support learning.**
- **Further training and guidance for House Tutors.**
- **Revise format of assemblies.**
- **Consider use of ICT to support learning, particularly the use of portable devices.**

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

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. This session a number of departments chose to continue with the 'old' Higher. Next session all will have to offer the new courses for all Highers and Advanced Highers.

In S3 pupils continue to follow a Broad General Education and make 9 subject choices based on curriculum areas. Pupils in S1 experience 4 different languages before making their language choice for S2. We will continue to monitor subject choice and language uptake from these year groups. Pupils in S1 and S2 follow 4 interdisciplinary courses. Staffing reductions have made it difficult for departments to work together and plan IDL courses. An evaluation with pupils also demonstrated that the majority of pupils were not able to define or explain what interdisciplinary working was. Departments will now be asked to consider how IDL work can be included as part of their BGE courses.

In S1 and S2 the time allocation for Art and Music was changed to provide more time for music. In S3 pupils were able to opt into 'Skillforce.' This course was delivered in partnership with the 'Skillforce' charity and pupil evaluations are extremely positive. National 4 and National 5 dance are now offered on the senior phase option form.

A number of pupils take part in the 'Forest School' and in June we were delighted to receive a national award as recognition of the schools partnership with the Novar Community Woods. The quality of curriculum provision for pupils with ASN needs has been greatly enhanced, with an increased number being presented for subjects at National 2 and National 3.

All subjects were required to revisit the Broad General Education and complete an audit of coverage of outcomes and experiences. This audit now needs to be extended to include IDL work and whole school projects, eg. Spring Fair.

In S3 the Youth Philanthropy Initiative was introduced to S3 House Tutor time; this has proved a very valuable addition to the curriculum.

The senior phase option form included study time for both S5 and S6 pupils. Evaluation showed that too many pupils were not using these periods effectively; changes have therefore been made with seniors

now timetabled to study periods.

The senior phase option form continues to develop and despite significant staff reductions we have been able to maintain a wide range of curriculum provision. Almost all pupils are able to get their first choice of options. Support and senior staff work hard to accommodate pupil needs and a number of alternative curriculum packages have been put in place for senior pupils. We do need to consider progression routes and to put further checks in place to ensure that pupils are following courses most appropriate to their needs.

Most departments have partnerships with external organisations and businesses to enhance curriculum provision. This includes off site visits, field work and visiting speakers.

Study leave this year was granted to all pupils sitting courses at National 5 or above. 14 pupils not eligible for study leave took part in a trial course focused on employability. All completed the course and then took part in Work Experience. Feedback from pupils was extremely positive and we will look to expand this initiative next session.

With the focus on new qualifications there has been limited development work on the whole school responsibilities of literacy, numeracy and health & wellbeing. We need to return to these areas and have already started work on a whole school literacy initiative.

Areas for further development

- **Supporting staff in the delivery of new Highers and Advanced Highers.**
- **Improving the quality of study periods in senior phase.**
- **Improving the quality and format of IDL provision in the BGE.**
- **Extending audit of Es and Os.**
- **Consider whole school responsibility for Literacy.**
- **Developing Scotland's Young Workforce targets.**

Meeting learning needs

Strengths and recent areas of improvement

We are extremely proud of our inclusive approach and our partnership work with external agencies. Education is now part of an integrated Care & Learning service. During the session we hosted a twilight session where Education, Health & Social Work staff associated with Dingwall Academy came together. We are also working on a collaborative parental engagement project involving Social Work and Child Support Workers.

The authority carried out a quality assurance visit looking at child plans. The feedback from this was extremely positive with our Child Plans seen as a model of good practice. Skills Development Scotland has also praised our work on recording leaver destinations.

The school hosted a partnership event focused on transition. This was attended by large numbers from the school, visiting schools, partners and the community.

Solution focused meetings remain central to our support programme. We have developed valuable partnerships with a number of external agencies including Social Work, Health, Educational Psychologists,

Mental Health workers, Calms, Shirley Project, Disability Team, Calman Trust and Skills Development Scotland. We have recently started two new initiatives 'Teens and Toddlers' focused on S3 pupils and 'Bright Futures' focused on S1 pupils.

PSAs continue to enhance our support provision and we very much value their input. During the lead up to primary transition a number of PSAs spent time working with P7s in our associated primaries. This has proved very valuable and will be extended next session.

The information evening for P7 parents were very positive, with over 200 parents attending.

This session, report cards were produced using the new SEEMiS system. Almost all parents who commented were positive about the new report format. Again, credit to staff who had to learn a new reporting system during, what is already, a very challenging time.

Evaluation of S3 and S5 parents showed that nearly all felt comfortable about contacting the school.

SMT and Pupil Support staff met to review the process for sharing pupil information at transition, and to look at improving general communication between SMT and Pupil Support given the change to SEEMiS.

Learning Support staff provided advice and training to staff at an in-service session. The support model has been changed to involve learning support staff more with individual child plans. Staffing reductions this year will make it difficult for us to maintain the quality of support provision and this is a major cause of concern.

Monitoring and Tracking were introduced throughout the school. Further advice has been issued to staff on how to build Monitoring & Tracking from the classroom up and this will be a major development priority for the coming session. There was a lack of consistency in the quality of learning conversations throughout the school, this will again be a development priority for next session.

Areas for further development

- **Training for House Tutors on the use of learning logs and carrying out learning conversations.**
- **Training for whole staff on learning conversations.**
- **Develop 'Teens and Tots' mentoring project.**
- **Develop 'Bright Futures' parental engagement project.**
- **Review learning support provision in the light of staffing reductions.**

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 is issued at the start of the session and the school improvement plan is shared with all staff . However we recognise that self-evaluation is about much more than just improvement planning and it is an integral part of all that we do. PTs were all given the opportunity to comment on whole school improvement priorities. Further training was then offered to PTs on producing Departmental Improvement Plans.

All departments produce improvement plans and are asked to review progress. More departments are now using an evidence base for their improvement planning, and a number have included pupil evaluations.

Pupils and parents are routinely asked for feedback. This feedback is shared with staff and includes impact and action points.

Evaluation of 2014 examination results was less robust than in previous years. This was partly as a result of the move to the new qualifications as it was difficult to make comparisons with previous years. The move from STACS to Insight also delayed the process.

Professional Update has been introduced for all staff. PTs were given training on how to use a coaching model for Professional Update meetings. Further advice has been issued to all staff on how to use the CPD website to create plans and maintain records. It is unfortunate that much of the focus has been on the mechanics of the process rather than the underlying philosophy. It is hoped that as staff become more familiar with the process that there can be more focus on individual reflection and professional learning.

Pupil focus groups were used to gather views on litter, learning logs, library use, senior study area and the Spring Fair. S3 and S5 pupils were also asked to complete whole school questionnaires.

Feedback from staff has revealed a need to return to some of the basics of uniform, behaviour and attendance.

Areas for further development

- Increased use of pupil voice, particularly to look at the Learners' Experiences.
- Provide more support and feedback to PTs on Departmental Improvement Plans.
- Develop staff confidence in the Professional Update process.
- Consider more opportunities for staff feedback.
- Consider day to day monitoring of uniform, behaviour and attendance.