

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



## Standards and Quality Report

The Highland Council  
Education, Culture and Sport Service

Dingwall Academy  
August 2016

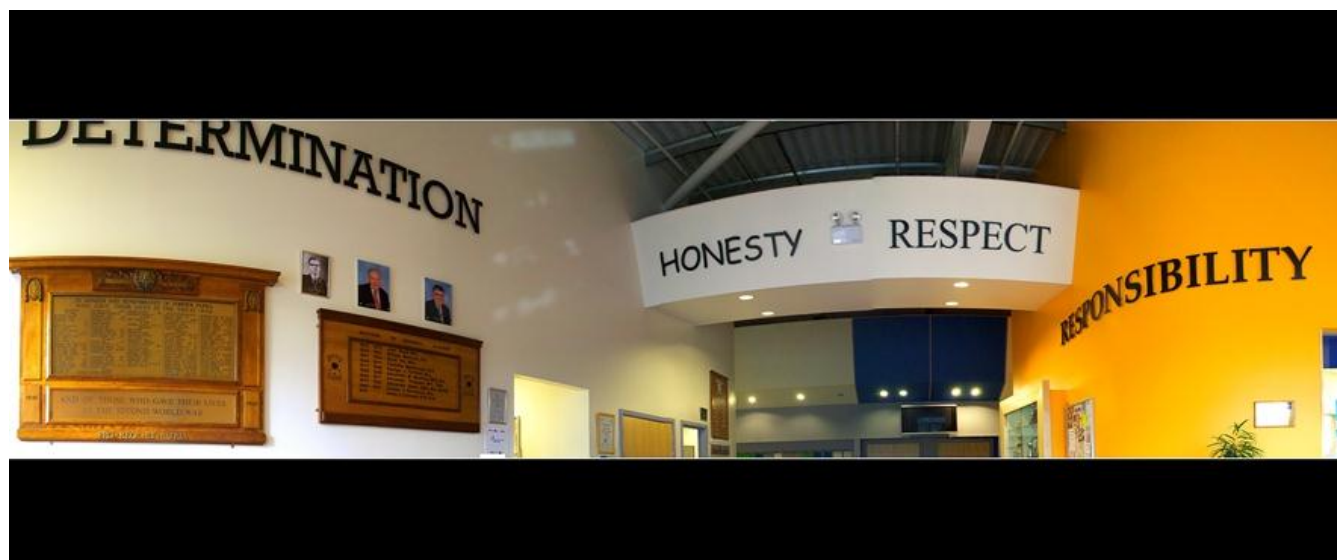
### Our school vision, values and aims

#### 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.**
- **Pupil Behaviour.**
- **Celebrating achievements and successes.**
- **Sense of community.**

#### **Our Improvements Last Session**

- **Introduction of whole school literacy initiative.**
- **Monitoring and tracking systems.**
- **Intervention projects, including parental engagement.**
- **Partnership working with Highlife and CSWs.**
- **More robust approach to classroom observation.**
- **Reduction in pupil late-coming.**

#### **Our Priorities For Improvement for Next Session**

- **Further develop pupil responsibility for learning.**
- **Parental engagement – with a focus on learning.**
- **Attainment.**
- **More opportunities for shared planning to develop IDL.**
- **Introduce numeracy initiative.**
- **Develop employability strategy.**
- **Build on current monitoring and tracking systems to identify pupils at risk of underachievement.**
- **Further develop House Tutor Programme.**
- **Evaluation of partnerships and their impact on learning.**
- **Provide more in-house CPD and sharing practice opportunities.**

## 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, 36% of pupils achieved at least 5 passes at National 5. There were particularly good results in Administration, Art and Design, Computing Science, Music, Physical Education and RMPS.

In S5, 7.2% of pupils achieved 5 Highers. There were particularly good results in Administration, Business Management, Computing Science, Health & Food Technology, History, Music and Physical Education..

In S6, 31% of pupils from the original S4 roll left school with at least 5 Highers. 20% left with at least 1 Advanced Higher.

All Principal Teachers received some training in the use of the exam analysis programme 'Insight' and are now more confident in using the data to evaluate and inform improvements.

In addition to SQA presentations, the school has been working to increase the number of pupils presented for other awards. All S6 prefects undertook leadership training, as did those senior pupils involved in the P7 transition days. Pupils involved with the Rock Challenge initiative were registered for the Saltire Award and 12 pupils completed the 'Go Lead' award. A group of S4 pupils successfully completed an employability course during the exam period. An increased number of pupils took part in college based vocational pathway and Higher courses. A small group of pupils completed a distance learning Latin Course.

An evaluation with S2 parents showed that almost all parents agreed that their child enjoyed being at school. An evaluation with S5 parents showed that most agreed that their child's learning was progressing well.

#### Areas for further development

- Making more effective use of data to monitor progress and set targets.
- Overall tracking sheet; to monitor overall progress and the effectiveness of intervention strategies.
- Early identification and intervention with pupils at risk of underachieving.

## Learners' Experiences

### Strengths and recent areas of improvement

All staff are required to take part in classroom observations. A formal observation week involving staff from other schools and members of the Quality Improvement Team was arranged during May. The school was then asked to participate in a classroom observation exercise with Education Scotland and the Highland and Moray Council Quality Improvement teams. During these visits relationships between staff and pupils were found to be very good. Pupil behaviour was also recognised as being very good. During classroom observations there were examples of very good practice; however in some areas there was a lack of consistency across the school.

Discussions with S1 and S2 focus groups found that pupils had a varied experience across the school. Pupils were able to explain the purpose of monitoring and tracking and in most cases found it useful. There was a detailed evaluation of House Tutor time with the majority of pupils saying they enjoyed it and most saying that it had helped with studying and revision. However the checking of learning logs was varied and pupils requested even more time to be spent on study advice.

An information evening for S1 parents called 'Don't you have any homework?' was held in September. Almost all parents who attended found the evening useful. In response to previous feedback, S1 pupils attended the evening along with their parents. An evaluation exercise showed that an increased number of S1 pupils were able to explain how they could take responsibility for their learning. S1 pupils were also able to explain how they might take responsibility when preparing for assessments. Parents have requested more follow up activities to help them support their child's learning.

An information evening for parents of pupils in the senior phase was held in September. In response to feedback, an assembly for S4 focusing on revision was held at the same time. Almost all parents who attended the evening found it very useful. Parents would welcome more information on how to support their young learners. Those parents who attended explained that they now felt more confident and motivated to help their child at home; we need to consider how we provide ongoing support and also how we can encourage more parents to attend.

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. Details of pupils' achievements are gathered on a central data base. Highlife staff have access to this information and are able to use it to identify strengths and gaps.

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 over 300 pupils competed.

The Drama Club enjoys considerable success and this year presented 'Joseph and The Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat.' Pupils and staff put together an amazing performance that the school and wider community thoroughly enjoyed. The school participated in the 'Rock Challenge' initiative finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at the Scottish finals in Dundee. The CDT department have now established an Engineering Club and the mountain bike is very successful.

The English and Languages departments organised a variety of trips to Eden Court Theatre. There have been a number of highly successful residential trips including a Social Subjects visit to Edinburgh, The Alladale Challenge and a Ski Trip to the USA. Towards the end of term all pupils have the opportunity to take part in two days of activities. A wide range of activities are on offer including Edinburgh Zoo, Alton Towers, Highland Wildlife Park and Fairburn Activity Centre.

Again, we are extremely grateful to all staff who give their time to organise these trips and provide such memorable experiences.

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.

In March, the school ran a hugely successful Spring Fair. 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. Evaluations with S2 pupils showed that the majority enjoyed being involved with the Spring Fair. Pupils were asked to consider what skills they had developed and, among others, they were able to identify teamwork and communication.

Evaluations last session showed that pupils did not always particularly enjoy assemblies. Depute Head Teachers have worked to make assemblies more interactive and engaging. Next session, a pupil focus group will be asked to provide further feedback and to help plan assemblies for the next session.

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>

To further raise the profile of the school and to promote achievements the school now has a Facebook page and Twitter feed. Praise postcards are also sent home by SMT and some departments. Pupil feedback shows that pupils enjoy this form of reward. A staff focus group considered how we recognise achievement; rather than one whole school initiative departments were encouraged to look at their own systems for recording achievement. Departments have all devised their own systems and we now need to provide opportunities for sharing this good practice.

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.**
- **Continue to develop study skills and revision techniques.**
- **Recording of skills developed in all contexts of learning.**

## **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 and there is ongoing concern regarding the pressure of the assessment arrangements

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. The amount of time given to languages, ICT and Maths in the BGE will increase next session. Unfortunately, due to staffing reductions, HFT has been removed from the S1 curriculum. The S1 – S3 curriculum is under review and we need to ensure that all the Health & Wellbeing outcomes are delivered.

An evaluation exercise with S1 and S2 showed that although pupils enjoyed the Interdisciplinary Courses, most did not find them challenging or relevant. An evaluation exercise with staff showed that, although staff valued and recognised the purpose of Interdisciplinary Learning, they felt that more opportunities should be provided for departments to make links with each other or to develop work around a whole school theme or topic. Interdisciplinary Learning will now be developed as an integral part of S1 – S3 courses. Departments have already shared S1 course outlines and the plan is to develop a BGE 'Curriculum Room.' This room will be used to share course information and to encourage shared planning and delivery.

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. A number of pupils are also given the opportunity to take part in Forest School and Bicycle Maintenance. The school was involved with the Teens and Toddlers initiative where S3 pupils were supported to mentor a nursery pupil.

The literacy group organised and ran three literacy focus initiatives throughout the session. A formal evaluation exercise is being carried out with staff and pupils and the results of this exercise will inform the development of literacy next session.

In S3, the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative was delivered through Pupil Support and English. This has proved to be a very valuable addition to the curriculum developing skills in communication, teamwork and research.

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 although staffing reductions mean that many subjects are now at capacity. Scottish Studies has had to be removed from the curriculum and we are looking at alternative methods of delivering the Rural Skills course. 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. The senior phase option forms now allow pupils to negotiate work experience as part of their curriculum.

Most departments have partnerships with external organisations and businesses to enhance curriculum provision. This includes off site visits, field work and visiting speakers. This year there will be an evaluation of our partnership arrangements and their impact on learning.

DYW money was used to fund an additional PSA for one day per week to pilot an employability unit with a number of seniors already involved with either work experience or part time work. It proved difficult to deliver this in the short timescale available, particularly with only weekly contact with the group. However, it was still a valuable exercise from which we have learned a great deal. Next session we plan to use Google Classroom to help deliver resources and to maintain more regular contact with the group.

Study leave this year was granted to all pupils sitting exams at National 5 or above. Pupils not eligible for study leave took part in an employability course that involved a week of work experience. Evaluations from this week were very positive. Pupils developed a range of employability skills and a small number have secured employment as a result.

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

- **Continue to support staff in the delivery of new Highers and Advanced Highers.**
- **Provide opportunities for shared planning and delivery of IDL.**
- **Review audit of Es and Os – with a particular focus on the impact of removing HFT from S1.**
- **Introduce whole school numeracy initiative.**
- **DYW strategy.**

## Strengths and recent areas of improvement

We are extremely proud of our inclusive approach and our partnership work with external agencies. The school made a successful bid for additional funds to provide a parenting programme and the 'Bright Futures' programme was delivered to a group of S1 pupils and parents. The long-term effectiveness of this intervention will be tracked; initial feedback is positive with parents keen to engage with the process.

Skills Development Scotland praised our work on recording leaver destinations and we have excellent communication with our SDS link. We recognise the importance of developing employability skills; an event for senior pupils is being organised for next session. Skills development will also be included in the House Tutor programme. We do need to ensure that all staff are aware of the Career Education Standard and this will be a focus for next session's improvement plan.

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. However, we are concerned about the capacity of all Care and Learning staff to sustain these important meetings.

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 spend time working with P7s in our associated primaries. Pupils with particular needs are also invited in for some additional support regarding transition.

The information evening for P7 parents were very positive, with 170 parents attending. Feedback from pupils and parents on their transition experience is extremely positive.

We have moved away from end of session reports to two interim reports. Almost all parents who commented were positive about this new report format. However, we continue to have concerns over the effectiveness of the SEEMiS system and the additional workload it can create. Some feedback from pupils and parents commented on the variation of report comments and we have to ensure that all reporting informs learning.

Evaluation of S2 and S5 parents showed that almost all were comfortable about contacting the school.

The system for communicating and sharing information across the school on SEEMiS needs to be refined.

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.

Classroom observations have revealed an inconsistency in the use of differentiation and it is recognised that this has not been a priority during the last few sessions. We do need to revisit this area and it is a development priority for next session.

Monitoring and Tracking was introduced throughout the school and all departments have devised systems for recording pupil progress. These systems have been devised within a whole school framework and all feed into monitoring and tracking on SEEMiS. Further work is required to moderate standards both within and between departments. Pupil feedback indicates that they value monitoring and tracking,



however there were varied experiences in terms of learning conversations.

During this session we had expected to take delivery of chrome books for each pupil. Unfortunately there has been a delay to the roll out and this is a source of frustration to both staff and pupils. Some initial training has been delivered on the use of Google Classroom and a number of staff are using it well. However, until we have a definite timescale and plan for the introduction of chrome books it is not possible to expect all staff to invest time on training.

#### Areas for further development

- **Training for whole staff on learning conversations.**
- **Follow up activities for 'Bright Futures' cohort.**
- **Review learning support provision in the light of staffing reductions.**
- **Training on use of Google Classroom.**
- **Whole school awareness and work with Career Education Standard.**

### 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. The improvement plan develops throughout the year and grows from ongoing evaluation and an awareness of whole school, authority and national priorities. We recognise that self-evaluation is about much more than just improvement planning and it is an integral part of all that we do.

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. There is a need to provide more opportunities for staff, and in particular Principal Teachers, to share and learn from others' improvement planning.

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

Professional Update has been introduced for all staff. PTs received 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. A number of in-house CPD opportunities were provided for staff and this included a focus on professional update. A professional newsletter has been introduced and the aim is to issue it once a term.

S1 and S2 pupil focus groups were asked to reflect on their learning experiences and a summary was

issued to all staff. More opportunities need to be provided for the pupil voice.

Pupil focus groups were used to gather pupil views on specific areas including library use, litter and learning logs. As a result of pupil feedback the learning logs have been simplified and we have also explored the possibility of learning logs being available electronically. Also, as a result of pupil feedback, a new user protocol has been agreed with the library.

Google Form has proved to be a very valuable means of gathering feedback and more use will be made of this next session. However we need to ensure that all pupils and staff are confident in using this system.

Staff were asked to feedback on the effectiveness of SEEMiS and this revealed ongoing concerns and frustrations with the system. As a result some behaviour code procedures have been changed for next session.

The staff Health & Wellbeing group was established to look at providing support for all staff. Twelve staff took part in a coaching and mentoring programme run in conjunction with Psychological services. The feedback from this was overwhelmingly positive with staff explaining how the course had helped them structure conversations with both pupils and staff. Follow up sessions have already been planned for next session.

All staff are finding the current climate extremely difficult and it is important that we provide opportunities to listen, support and learn from each other.

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

- **Increased use of pupil voice.**
- **Provide more support and feedback to PTs on Departmental Improvement Plans, and in particular how to gather evidence.**
- **Develop staff confidence in the Professional Update process.**
- **Provide more opportunities for staff to share practice and to take leadership responsibilities.**