



**School: Dingwall Academy**

**Head Teacher: Karen Cormack**

**Date submitted: June 2018**

## **Context of the school:**

This year we celebrate 10 years since moving into the new Dingwall Academy building.

Dingwall Academy is a true comprehensive, covering a large catchment area taking in the market town of Dingwall and a number of rural communities. Current school roll of 1080, of which 98 are placing requests. More than 50% of pupils use school transport, with some travelling over 20 miles. There is a strong sense of community pride and school events are always well supported.

Staffing continues to present the main challenge and we have experienced significant reductions in our staffing over the last 5 years. Despite this we have been able to maintain a broad curriculum; a number of pupils also travel to college courses at both Inverness and North Highland Campus. A small number of pupils have distance learning courses delivered online. We were also one of the first Highland schools to take delivery of Chrome books, and all pupils now have access to an individual device.

36% of pupils have additional support needs, and this session more than 50% of our incoming S1 have a recognised support need. The school prides itself on its inclusive ethos and within the school we have an ASD base, a Hearing Impaired department and space to support pupils with SEBD.

We have expanded our vocational provision and now have a working café and mobile nail bar in the school. Our post school destinations show that 98% of pupils last session moved onto positive post school destinations.

Visitors to the school comment on the friendliness of pupils and the strong and positive relationships between staff and pupils.

We have a very pro-active parent council and very much appreciate the support of our parent forum.

## School Vision, Values and Aims:

Dingwall Academy prides itself on being at the heart of the community. Our school vision is

**“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.”**

Our school values were chosen by staff and pupils and are displayed at the front of the school.



These values are: **respect, responsibility, honesty and determination.**

Our school aims are to deliver the 4 capacities of Curriculum for Excellence:

**Confident Individuals**

**Successful Learners**

**Responsible Citizens**

**Effective Contributors**

## What have we done to close the attainment gap?

Part of our Pupil Equity Funding(PEF) was used to support a Literacy Programme in S1 and S2. Funds were used to purchase the Fresh Start literacy programme. Funding was also used to timetable an additional probationer in the English department.

22 S1 pupils took part in the programme; pupils were extracted for one period each day. On average pupils reading age increased by 1 year. All pupils explained that the programme had helped developed their confidence and resilience. They described themselves as being less afraid of making mistakes, and many are now able to read out loud in class. All pupils were able to identify where they had applied their literacy skills to other subject areas.

In S2, 8 pupils followed a condensed version of the Fresh Start programme.

Next steps and lessons learned:

We plan to continue with the programme next session and have earlier identification of the target group. *This will allow S1 pupils to start the programme immediately in August.* 4 additional members of staff have now taken part in the Fresh Start training, allowing the PT to delegate part of the delivery *and to develop the next stage.*

The other focus for our PEF funding was employability. During the first two terms pupils were involved in transforming a classroom into a working café. PEF funding was used to help resource this refit and to purchase equipment.

In January the café opened as a bookable facility. Bookings have been very good and the café has hosted class visits, community visits, parent sessions, staff meetings and other events. PEF funding was used to fund a PSA to oversee the running of the café. 19 pupils have been employed in the café, pupils were given the opportunity to apply and others were recommended by support staff. Pupils have been asked to comment on how useful they have found the experience, almost all say that their confidence improved by working in the café, and almost all said that they felt it had helped them understand more about the world of work.

Next steps:

The café will continue to operate for at least the next 2 years. We need to consider if there are qualifications that pupils involved in the café can achieve. We are looking to attract more pensioner groups to the café and are delivering dementia awareness training in school. The aim is to promote work in the care sector. We need to ensure that pupils are aware of how the skills developed in the café can be transferred to other areas.

Intervention programmes:

We run a number of intervention activities where pupils are extracted from timetable to follow an alternative programme. These include Growing2gether, Velocity Café and Social Skills Groups. We have improved the methods used to select pupils for these interventions, and have also introduced an intervention protocol and a pupil profile.

## **What have we done to improve attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy?**

We have formalised target setting procedures and all senior phase pupils now set targets for exams.

In S3 we established a group supporting all pupils identified as working towards 5 or 6 National 5s. This group followed a programme of activities and were also given additional information and advice via Google Classroom. The majority of pupils said that they thought being part of the group helped them.

The Head Teacher has formal meetings with the Principal Teachers of Maths and English to check that pupils leaving school throughout the session have achieved English and Maths at the highest possible level. The Depute Head Teacher with responsibility for the upper school monitors the literacy and numeracy progress of any potential school leavers.

The English department have reviewed their presentation policy and the number of pupils presented for N5 English has increased. The Maths department gave an increased number of pupils the opportunity to be presented for N5 Maths, although a significant number will be presented over 2 years. The support department now create more robust programmes of work for all pupils, with an increased number linked to qualifications.

We offer senior pupils the opportunity to become Literacy Ambassadors. This year the group helped support pupils at Ben Wyvis Primary school and the feedback from this has been hugely positive. We plan to see if our Literacy Ambassador programme can be used to help support the Syrian families who are now a welcome part of our school.

### **What have we done to improve children and young people's health and wellbeing?**

Our safeguarding questionnaire shows that pupils feel well supported in school. The Physical Education programme has been adapted to provide pupils with more choice, particularly in the senior phase. This has increased pupil participation rates.

Our PSE programme is currently under review to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. We are fortunate to have a mental health worker now based in the school, although they are not exclusively attached to Dingwall Academy. He provides valuable information and advice to all staff, particularly pupil support. In partnership with pupil support, the mental health worker provided support sessions for pupils in the lead up to and during SQA exams.

In our safeguarding questionnaire the majority of pupils said that they felt the school did enough to make them feel safe online. Prior to the issue of the Chromebook devices we organised two information nights for parents where e safety was discussed.

We have started a group in school to support Looked After Children (CHAMPS group) and the initial feedback has been extremely positive.

We have a group looking at outdoor learning, this year all S1 pupils were given the opportunity to climb Fyrish Hill. We run 2 school activity days where pupils are provided with a range of opportunities. The Duke of Edinburgh programme has been re-introduced and S3 pupils have the opportunity to take part in the Alladale Challenge.

RASASH (Rape and Sexual Abuse Service Highlands) visited and spoke to all S2 pupils during PSE.

### **What have we done to improve employability skills and help our children and young people achieve sustained, positive school leaver destinations?**



PEF funding was used to create a working school café. 19 pupils have been employed in the café in a number of roles. We received a Social Enterprise award in recognition of the work in the café. Pupils involved in the café say that working there has helped their confidence, and helped them understand more about the world of work.



We also used PEF money to help 12 pupils train as nail technicians. They now operate a social enterprise called 'File 'n Style'.

Pictured here delivering a pensioner pamper session in the Sunflower café.

We have excellent links with our SDS officer (Careers). She works closely with staff and also works in classes. We run an employability programme for pupils not taking part in study leave. This includes work experience, business visits, CVs, personal statements and interview experience. The Rotary Club provide interview experience for Senior Phase pupils.

In S1 and S2 pupils spend time in House Tutor working on their Skills Booklet. This introduces pupils to the concept of soft and hard skills and asks them to reflect on how their involvement in particular events and activities helps their skill development. .

We have introduced an 'opportunities' Google Classroom. This is used to provide pupils with up to date information on employment and work experience opportunities. We are currently in the process of developing a partnership agreement with The Furnishing Service; and plan to work with them to provide employment opportunities.

Our senior option form encourages pupils to consider work experience as part of their curriculum. Last session the number of pupils taking part in work experience increased.

Pupils applying for Vocational Pathway courses at college were given better advice and support to help them prepare for interview. As a result the numbers successful in gaining places on the Vocational Pathways programme has increased to 55.

## **What have we done to improve attainment and to promote wider achievements?**

Data shows that pupils make excellent progress in a number of subjects. However there is inconsistency across the school and in a number of areas our attainment could improve.

Learners' achievements are recognised, recorded and celebrated. We share information on Facebook and via the monthly newsletter. With the arrival of the Chromebooks we have been able to introduce e portfolios.

Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a range of wider achievements and these are actively encouraged.

Last year we won the Scottish Finals of Rock Challenge.

At the Scottish Schools Athletics event pupils won 9 medals.

S3 Pupils take part in the ypi initiative. (Youth Philanthropy Initiative)

Our boys team won the Strathpuffer 24 hour cycle endurance event and our girls team was the youngest female quad to ever compete.

The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme has been re-introduced.

All S2 pupils are involved in the organisation of the Spring Fair.

We hold a whole school sponsored walk in October.

Activity days are organised for the last week of summer term.

There have been school trips this year to Edinburgh, Barcelona, Paris and Belgium.

S3 History pupils organised an exhibition commemorating 100 years of votes for women.

There are a range of extra-curricular sports available.

There are a range of clubs available including lego, debating, environment and Dungeons and Dragons.

We are preparing for a school show 'Annie' to be performed next November.

## **What have we done to engage with parents and the wider community?**

In addition to contact evenings we hosted information evenings for:

Primary 7 parents

S1 Parents – How to take responsibility for learning.

BGE parents – introduction to Chromebooks.

Senior Phase parents – introduction to Chromebooks.

Senior Phase parents – how to support your child in the lead up to exams.

The format of these evenings is very interactive and pupils are encouraged to attend along with parents.

Parents of pupils in S1 and S2 receive a weekly summary of homework, assessments and any whole school events.  
We have a very active parent council who help organise a number of events throughout the session.

We now host a Food Assembly in school each Wednesday. This has provided valuable partnership opportunities and we have had initial meetings with teaching staff and food producers.

The Spring Fair and Christmas Fair are both very popular and we are extremely grateful for the support received from the community.

Our Sunflower Café offers new opportunities and we hope that this will help the school develop more community partnerships.