

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 19 APRIL 2018

BRECHIN HIGH SCHOOL HMIE INSPECTION FEBRUARY 2018

BACKGROUND

1.1 In 2012 HMIE visited Brechin High School. The inspection report of June 2012 listed three themes for development:

- Improve the quality of learning and teaching,
- Increase expectations of what young people can learn and achieve and raise attainment,
- Ensure agreed targets for improvement are delivered through more effective leadership at all levels.

It also stated that HMIE would remain engaged with the school and return for a further engagement visit.

1.2 In February 2014 Archie Bathgate took up post as Head Teacher of Brechin High School. In March 2014 HMIE conducted their first continuing engagement visit to review progress against the three themes identified in 2012. The report, published in April 2014 stated **“Recent very promising signs of an improvement in ambition and morale across the school have not yet had time to make an impact. Overall, the pace of improvement in young people’s learning experiences and attainment since the initial inspection has been too slow.”**

1.3 HMIE visited again in November 2016. The report of this visit reviewed the three themes identified in 2012. The report highlighted that:

- the overall quality of learning and teaching was inconsistent and that the expectations of what young people could achieve were too low,
- staff did not make effective use of data to track individual pupil progress and that overall attainment was below that of the virtual comparator,
- whilst there was evidence of leadership at all levels throughout the school all staff did not consistently take appropriate action towards the school’s improvement priorities and that senior leaders needed to take action.

HMIE stated that they would conduct a further continuing engagement visit within 12 months. This visit occurred in February 2018.

1.4 In the time between the 2017 and 2018 visits the Head Teacher worked with young people, staff, parents and partners, in collaboration with colleagues from across schools and learning in order to address the issues raised in the 2016 visit. Comments made at the ‘debrief’ of the visit outline:

Theme 1 – Improve the quality of learning and teaching

The ‘Challenge Learning’ programme has had significant impact on staff. In almost all lessons routines were well established, mutually respectful relationships were evident and young people were clear about expected standards. Young people were able to link these expectations to the ‘Brechin Standard’. A greater emphasis on active learning resulted in an increased level of learner engagement. Further improvements are required to ensure that the pace and challenge of lessons is appropriate at all times and that the quality of feedback to young people is more consistent. Clearer expectations are required for young people in ‘targeted’ groups.

Theme 2 – Increase expectations of what young people can learn and achieve and raise attainment

The school has improved how it uses data in both the Broad General Education (BGE) and the Senior Phase in order to plan for improvement. Tracking and monitoring in the BGE has improved. Staff are increasingly taking responsibility for the appropriate use of data. There is

a need to revisit the 1-6 point scale used when reporting to parents on the progress of young people in the BGE. Attainment is improving in some measures however most continue to be below the virtual comparator, (The Virtual Comparator is made up of pupils from schools in other local authorities who have similar characteristics. It allows us to compare how the performance of our pupils compares to a similar group of pupils from across Scotland in order to help self-evaluation and improvement activities).

Theme 3 - Ensure agreed targets for improvement are delivered through more effective leadership at all levels

The senior leadership team (SLT) have successfully led and directed the consultation for a new vision and values. Staff recognise that the SLT have an unrelenting focus on improvement priorities. Middle leaders feel supported and challenged by SLT and better able to support and challenge those they lead. There are increased leadership opportunities for staff across the school. These are linked to the improvement priorities. There are positive examples of leadership opportunities for young people.

2.0 NEXT STEPS

HMIE stated that sufficient progress has been made with regards the quality of learning and teaching and effective leadership. Further support to improve attainment will be provided by the Local Authority and the Area Lead Officer (Education Scotland). The Local Authority will submit an initial report on attainment for 2017-2018 to the Area Lead officer in September 2018 and a final report on 2017-2018 attainment in April 2019.

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