

Education & Learning Directorate

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Your Ref:

Our Ref: DISTRICT\INFO\QI\INDICES\ES\REPORTS\
STEWARTRY\DALRY SEC\LET001-JB\EB\RL

Date: 17 March 2021

To:

**All Parents and Carers of Pupils at
Dalry Secondary**

Any enquiries please contact:

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Dear Parent / Carer

**LETTER REPORTING ON PROGRESS OF DALRY SECONDARY SCHOOL SINCE THE
EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT OF 10 MARCH 2020**

Dalry Secondary School was inspected by Education Scotland in January 2020. The inspection focussed on learning, teaching and assessment and raising attainment and achievement. The school received a rating of 'good' for raising attainment and achievement and 'satisfactory' for learning, teaching and assessment.

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of the Education and Learning Directorate, Dumfries and Galloway Council, I am writing to inform you of the progress made by Dalry Secondary School since the publication of the Education Scotland inspection report in March 2020. The report highlighted three main aspects for development. This letter sets out actions taken by the school in addressing these points.

Continue to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning across the school.

Since the period of inspection in January 2020, the school has made significant progress in the development of policy and understanding around: building positive relationships; creating a shared understanding of what makes a good lesson at Dalry Secondary School and building a shared understanding of the quality of practice across the school.

Working groups involving staff from Dalry Secondary School have worked with colleagues from its partner school, Castle Douglas High School (CDHS) to develop understanding and construct school policy through professional reading and discussion by: looking outwards at excellence in other schools; referencing the messages outlined in 'How Good is Our School? (Fourth Edition)' and by taking on board the messages highlighted in the summarised inspection findings. Completion of a learning and teaching policy was interrupted by the first lockdown due to the national issues around Covid-19. This was then restarted in the Autumn term of 2020 but has again stalled as the school has entered lockdown for a second time. This priority will be continued when schools return.

During the period from January to the end of March 20, the school put in place a focussed and robust classroom observation policy, finalised and agreed through consultation with staff across the school partnership. This policy will be used to help share an understanding of what makes high quality learning and teaching and to focus the purpose of classroom observation on improving learning and teaching. The aim of this policy is to help teachers work together in school and across the partnership to improve the consistency of practice and raise attainment. Due to the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown, the school is not in the position to evidence the difference the policy is making - at the time of writing. However, when schools and society begin to return to normal, teachers will have the tools and the shared understanding to respond, recover and take forward the recommendation made during the inspection process.

Continue to develop all teachers' understanding of national standards through engagement with colleagues in school, across the school partnership and the local authority. This has the potential to raise attainment further and improve outcomes for young people.

Over the last two sessions the senior leadership team has been building the curriculum offer within the partner schools and, significantly, across the partnership using their combined resources to widen the offer available to young people. Increasingly, there are more teachers and managers who have responsibilities across both partnership schools. This is giving greater opportunity for collaboration in terms of developments, collaborative moderation and verification of standards. By regarding subject staff across the partnership as one faculty, where appropriate, the schools have been able to improve the opportunity for the single teacher subject areas at Dalry Secondary to regularly discuss standards and make progress with their faculty colleagues. This is reducing feelings of isolation and beginning to lead to improved collaborative work.

Increasingly, staff are participating in professional learning associated with moderation, building confidence in applying national standards and improving the reliability of teachers' professional judgement. After the second period of lockdown, specific moderation activities relating to National Qualification courses will further develop teacher confidence in applying national standards and will provide better evidence of progress towards overtaking the recommendation made following the visit from Education Scotland. To this end, the school will take part in moderation activities across the two partnership schools as well as the wider local authority.

Develop further and embed the recently introduced approach to evaluating all young people's progress in their learning. Ensure that learning conversations are of a consistently high quality and result in learners agreeing ambitious targets and having clarity about their next steps in learning.

Dalry Secondary School has adopted the Education and Learning 'Four Stages of Progress and Achievement' format as part of its management information system. Through the 'Four Stages' approach, staff have a better understanding of pupil progress across all curriculum areas in the broad general education (BGE). All staff make use of the approach to help assess learner progress within a Curriculum for Excellence level. All teachers understand their important role in working together to benchmark and agree approaches using the 'Four Stages' to describe the progress of learners in the BGE. This has the potential to raise attainment and secure improved outcomes for young people and will continue to be part of the school's focus to fully embed improvements.

On schools' return for the Autumn 20 term, teachers had begun to encourage young people to participate more in the planning of their learning, helping them to take greater ownership. This approach was interrupted by the second COVID-19 lockdown but will continue to be an improvement priority when the young people return to school.

Dalry Secondary School has continued to implement plans for assessing and tracking the progress of young people in the Senior Phase. Teachers have been developing their skills in conducting learning conversations with young people, encouraging each young person to record the feedback for improvement in their booklets. This is building a more complete picture of progress on a regular basis, which the young person can share with parents between tracking periods to further improve ways of providing regular feedback to parents about their child's progress and attainment. Though interrupted by both periods of lockdown, the school will continue focus attention on this aspect of its work to ensure the approach is applied consistently across the school. Teachers have taken account of advice given by Education Scotland during the inspection and now have an improved understanding of the impact that monitoring and tracking procedures can have on raising attainment. This, along with the focus on improving feedback to pupils and parents about progress, will remain a priority for next session. Post Covid-19, it is anticipated that the school can evidence the impact of these changes

Since the inspection of January 2020, Dalry Secondary School has taken positive steps to address the recommendations made during the inspection. The work completed and planned for future improvement, while interrupted by the current global pandemic, demonstrates significant capacity for future improvement. The school recognises that the global pandemic has compromised the ability to evidence the impact of developments that have been implemented; however, remains committed to ensuring that the planned activities stated above will remain a priority for the coming sessions when collection of evidence will be possible.

The school has made progress in implementing Education Scotland's recommendations and is in a strong position to improve further. I wish to congratulate all within the school community on the progress made over the last year.

Yours sincerely

Jim Brown
Head of Education (Curriculum & Quality) and Chief Education Officer