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30 November 2017

To:

**All Parents and Carers of Pupils at  
Sanquhar Academy**

Any enquiries please contact

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Dear Parent / Carer

**LETTER REPORTING ON PROGRESS OF SANQUHAR ACADEMY SINCE EDUCATION  
SCOTLAND REPORT OF 29 NOVEMBER 2016**

Sanquhar Academy was inspected by Education Scotland in September 2016. The inspection focussed on: learning, teaching and assessment; the curriculum; young people's attainment and achievements and leadership and management. The school achieved a rating of 'good' for all four Quality Indicators evaluated. As part of the quality reporting arrangements of Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning, Dumfries and Galloway Council, I am writing to inform you of the progress made by Sanquhar Academy since the publication of the Education Scotland report in November 2016. The report highlighted three main aspects for development. This letter sets out actions taken by the school in addressing these points.

**Continue to develop the curriculum to ensure young people are receiving their entitlements, with related pathways into the senior phase. This needs to include their statutory requirement for religious and moral education.**

The school's curriculum model has been adapted to ensure that all young people study a Religious and Moral Education course through the broad general education (from S1 to S3) for one period per week with the intention of extending this into the senior phase (from S4 onwards), including National Qualification courses, from next session.

All young people will study a Modern Language up to the end of S3 from next session with opportunities to progress in the senior phase. Spanish 'faster-sessions' have been introduced in both the broad general education and the senior phase by securing a Modern Languages assistant to the school's staff.

Work is underway to ensure that all Social Studies experiences and outcomes, including those related to Modern Studies, are being delivered through the Geography, History and Personal Achievement courses.

Timetabling of Science courses in both S1 and S2 has been prioritised to ensure that all young people study courses in this curriculum area for four periods per week in a more consistent and effective way.

The Careers and Work Experience Standards are being implemented through well-developed partnership working and events such as the recent 'Literacy and Careers' day and it is the aim to introduce an Employability course into the broad general education from next session.

Through dialogue and discussion, as part of the approach to personal support in S1 and S2, young people are now beginning to know themselves better as learners by making effective use of feedback to review progress, set learning targets and plan next steps. This has been supported through learning opportunities for all teaching staff, including professional research projects.

Transition projects have been further developed with the cluster primaries, ensuring greater opportunities for staff in both sectors to work collaboratively, in particular, in developing new approaches to developing literacy and numeracy skills.

This session new strategies have been introduced to enable different curriculum areas to work together more closely to gather evidence, moderate, evaluate and make secure judgements on the achievement of a level in literacy and numeracy. Teaching staff have been exploring their role as leaders of learning which is encouraging further developments in improving assessment across the curriculum.

**Build on existing good practice to ensure consistently high-quality learning and teaching across the school. This should take account of meeting the learning needs of all young people.**

The professional learning series 'For understanding' is continuing this session with a focus on Metacognition - 'Thinking about Learning'. By using peer observations in a targeted approach to evaluating and improving learning and teaching we are moving from a teacher-led learning experience to one where young people are developing more responsibility for leading their own learning.

The school's team review process has continued to evolve and improve and is providing robust quality assurance of the work of the school. The first phase of reviews has been completed. Time is now being taken to reflect on the process and consult with stakeholders before moving on to the second phase of reviews later this session.

Links are continuing to be made with other schools and learning providers to improve the range of courses and qualifications on offer to all young people across all ability groups, for example, a wider range of Advanced Highers and Skills for Work courses are now on offer and there has been an increased uptake in Open University modules this session. These links are also providing an opportunity for staff to share their experiences and improvement journeys with others in order to increase the capacity for progress across the school. An increased use of a wide range of data and other evidence is being used to set targets for improving attainment at whole school, subject and individual level.

The school is effectively using financial resources from the Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund to provide interventions to support young people in our targeted groups in order to raise attainment levels and close the poverty related attainment gap. Our strategies are focussing on improving learning and teaching methodologies and developing

literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and employability skills - leading to positive sustained destinations.

The appointment of a new Principal Teacher for Additional Support for Learning will lead to improved advice and guidance for colleagues on how best to meet the needs of all learners. The team of learning assistants is benefiting from new professional learning opportunities and links to other specialist teams. Young people with specific needs moving to Sanquhar Academy from our cluster primary schools are benefitting from participation in a robust enhanced transition programme led by our highly effective 'Opportunities for All' officer.

**Develop further approaches to assessment and sharing of standards for the achievement of a level in the broad general education. This is to help all young people make appropriate progress.**

Moderation activities are ongoing with our cluster primaries and neighbouring secondary schools. This has involved shared planning of assessments and improved collaboration and partnership working going forward which is leading to improved confidence in making accurate assessment judgements in the broad general education using a wider range of evidence.

Teaching staff are now familiar with the new benchmarks which have been published since the inspection visit last year. The benchmarks are now strategic in the planning and implementation of assessment activities in the broad general education. This improved confidence is leading to better evidence which in turn has enhanced the accuracy and appropriateness of pathways into the senior phase for all learners.

Improving knowledge and use of the new benchmarks has given staff greater confidence in making decisions on the achievement of a level by young people in the broad general education. This has also enabled staff to be more focussed in tracking young peoples' progress through the early years of secondary school and has improved the quality of advice and guidance that we are able to share with young people and their families when planning for transition in to the senior phase. The impact of this information is evident in the improved accuracy of presentation levels in National Qualification courses.

A new curriculum model for S3 students has been introduced this session in order to maintain the breadth of curriculum areas studied whilst allowing for a greater degree of depth and personalisation and choice. Initial feedback from all stakeholder groups has been positive at this early stage. However, this will continue to closely monitor the ongoing impact of these changes on learning and teaching and the attainment and achievement of young people as they make the transition to the senior phase and progress through their National Qualification courses.

The school has made very good progress in implementing recommendations from Education Scotland 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

Gillian Brydson  
Head of Education