

Your Ref:

Skills, Education and Learning Directorate

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Our Ref: DISTRICT\INFO\QI\INDICES\ES\REPORTS\
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Dumfries

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To:

Any enquiries please contact:

**All Parents and Carers of Pupils at
Castle Douglas High School**

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Dear Parent / Carer

LETTER REPORTING ON PROGRESS OF CASTLE DOUGLAS HIGH SCHOOL SINCE THE EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT OF MAY 2019

Castle Douglas High School was inspected by Education Scotland in March 2019. The inspection focussed on learning, teaching and assessment and children's attainment and achievements.

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of Skills, Education and Learning Directorate, Dumfries and Galloway Council, I am writing to inform you of the progress made by Castle Douglas High School since the publication of the Education Scotland report in May 2019. The report highlighted two main aspects for development. This letter sets out actions taken by the school in addressing these points.

Continue to develop the understanding of all staff of their key role in leading and managing change. Develop a shared understanding across all staff of what consistently high-quality learning and teaching looks like in Castle Douglas High School.

The school has been building the understanding of all staff of their key role in leading and managing change through the development of policy: Better Relationships, Better Learning policy, Learning and Teaching policy and Classroom Observation policy. This has also been happening through the implementation of a planned approach for assessing and checking the progress of young people across all stages.

Good progress has been made in the development of policy around building positive relationships, creating a shared understanding of what makes a good lesson at Castle Douglas High School and building a shared understanding of the quality of practice across the school.

Working groups involving staff at all levels across Castle Douglas High School and involving staff from their partner school Dalry Secondary, have developed policy through professional reading and discussion, by looking outwards at excellence in other schools and by referencing the messages outlined in the national quality improvement document *How Good Is Our School?*⁴. Completion of the Learning and Teaching policy has been interrupted by the national issues around Covid-19 but this will be returned to as soon as schools restart. A Better Relationships, Better Learning policy is being implemented in tandem with work on Nurture. The school now has in place an agreed, focussed and robust classroom observation policy. The work on the last two policies has been finalised and agreed through consultation with staff across the schools' partnership.

These policies have been designed and written to complement one another and will be the basis used to ensure understanding and observation of high-quality learning and teaching. Using these policies will help all teaching staff in their key role to lead and manage improvements that result in more consistent, high-quality practice that will raise attainment.

The school will continue to build the culture of shared understanding and shared responsibility when schools return following the Covid19 pandemic through completion of a learning and teaching policy as outlined above, responding to the need to improve pace, breadth and challenge in the classroom and developing an understanding of Nurture.

The school leadership team will continue to involve and rely on all staff in all aspects of the school improvement agenda whether that is at whole school level or for subject specific improvement. The school has demonstrated that they work well together in developing a shared understanding of leading and managing change.

Continue to develop approaches to planning for, assessing and checking the progress of young people across all stages.

Castle Douglas High School has adopted the Progress and Achievement module in SEEMIS. Through this module staff have a better understanding of pupil progress across all curriculum areas in the broad general education. All staff make use of the 'Four Stages of Progress' poster to help assess progress within a Curriculum for Excellence level. All teachers understand their important role in working together to benchmark and agree approaches using the four-point scale to describe the progress of learners in the broad general education. This has the potential to raise attainment and secure improved outcomes for young people and will continue to be a key focus in the coming session.

Castle Douglas High School has continued with the implementation of plans for assessing and checking the progress of young people in the senior phase. Teachers are developing their skills in learning conversations with young people: that the young person records; that build a more complete picture of progress on a regular basis; that the young person can share with parents between tracking periods. The experience of this first year of the new procedures with pupils in the senior phase has been positive. By applying advice given by Education Scotland, the school has identified priorities for next session that will further improve this initiative.

The school has also begun the process of tracking the wider achievements of young people. This began as an initiative looking specifically at vulnerable pupils and addressing the barriers that were reducing their involvement in the wider life and opportunities the school has to offer. This is now being extended to track and accredit the wider achievements of all pupils.

Education Scotland have commented that the planned monitoring and tracking procedures have the potential to make a difference to the attainment and achievement of the young people. The next steps to be taken are to ensure all teachers conduct learning conversations consistently across all curricular areas focusing on the next steps in learning for the young person. The school also needs to take steps to ensure young people use their tracking and monitoring booklets consistently to record the advice given by their teachers; to deepen their understanding of their learning and to ensure that barriers to learning are addressed. The school aims to improve pupil and parent knowledge around progress in learning across all stages and they will conduct surveys with pupils and parents to ascertain the impact of changes made.

Since the inspection of March 2019 Castle Douglas High School has taken positive steps to address the recommendations made during the inspection. The work completed and work planned for future improvement demonstrates a good capacity for future improvement. This is the result of the hard work and commitment of the Headteacher, staff and young people.

I wish to congratulate all within the school community on their progress over the last year.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Brydson
Director Skills, Education and Learning