

**KEITH GRAMMAR SCHOOL
PROGRESS REPORT TO PARENTS
SEPTEMBER 2017**



Context of School

Keith Grammar School has a roll of 398 and lies within a large rural catchment area in Moray, with 6 associated primary schools. The school has a welcoming and friendly ethos and the young people are proud of their school.

The school was first inspected in September 2015 and was revisited by Education Scotland in November 2016; the main areas identified for improvement were:

- Improve the curriculum to ensure all young people can make the best possible progress in their learning
- Develop the monitoring and tracking of young people's progress, including involving young people in regular conversations about their learning
- Develop a clear strategic overview of the improvements needed to raise attainment

Following the continuing engagement visit in November 2016, it was agreed that the school had made progress since the original inspection and had taken forward some important improvements. It was identified that the school needed time to evaluate these changes to ensure outcomes for young people are continuing to improve. As part of their on-going support, it was decided that officers from Moray Council would carry out a review of the school within one year and HMI would join their team. This was undertaken in September 2017 and this report informs of the progress being made by the school.

Raising expectations and improving attainment and achievement

There is now stability within the school staffing, both in promoted and unpromoted staff, and this has had a positive effect on the ability of the school to take forward a planned programme to improve attainment levels in the school. This has led to a shared awareness of the improvement priorities within the school and a collective focus on raising expectations and developing positive relationships within the school community.

The attainment of young people is improving and moving towards being in line with local and national comparators and in some areas exceeding these levels. The work the school is undertaking to improve attainment is ongoing, using a range of strategies including mentoring, the Universal Pupil Support (UPS) provision, learning conversations and tracking and monitoring approaches. The senior leadership team are involved in this through S3 profile interviews and also mentoring in the senior phase, leading to improved clarity of targets and a focus on raising attainment.

There is a positive improvement in numeracy attainment and the school is continuing to develop literacy within the BGE and Senior Phase; the work being undertaken to improve attainment in literacy is ongoing. Within S4, most young people are achieving National 4 English and Maths or better. Overall school leaver attainment in literacy and numeracy at both SCQF level 4 and level 5 has continually improved over the last three years

The performance of young people by the end of S4 at SCQF level 4 and level 5 in 2016/17 shows signs of improvement. The percentage of young people achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 3, 4 and 5 is now broadly in line with that of young people with similar needs and backgrounds in other schools across Scotland.

In S5, the performance of young people gaining three or more awards at SCQF level 6 has improved from 2016/17 and the school should continue to maintain these increased levels. The school has fewer young people undertaking SCQF level 7 qualifications, although there is an increase in the number undertaking YASS qualifications through the Open University in Scotland.

By the end of S6 in 2016/17, the attainment of the leavers at SCQF level 6 has remained broadly in line with that of young people with similar needs and backgrounds in schools across Scotland.

All young people are benefitting from learning conversations, allowing them to evaluate their progress and set targets/next steps in their learning. There is an ongoing emphasis on ensuring challenge is evident and sustained for all pupils. There is also a focus on relationships, aspiration and growth mindset for all students resulting in more young people improving their attainment.

The school has placed an increasing emphasis on achievement with a range of varied opportunities and curricular prospects for all our young people. This is contributing to the positive school culture where success is used to inspire others, with the celebration of these successes being a strong feature of assemblies, awards ceremonies and the relaunched school newsletter. There is opportunity for the school to now work towards accreditation for more of these wider achievements.

A review of the UPS provision is being undertaken and the effectiveness and consistency of experience for learners will continue to be evaluated and monitored by the senior leadership team as a school improvement priority.

Consistency in Learning and Teaching

Learners benefit from positive relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils; there are clear lesson aims which ensure expectations are clear and most pupils are engaged in learning and on task. The deployment of pupil support assistants is used well to provide help for young people requiring additional support. There is good classroom management with positive behaviour evident in most areas of the school.

Young people are beginning to link learning across curricular areas and good questioning techniques are developing in almost all classes. However, there is a limited assessment of pupil understanding in some classes. It is also the case in some classes that pupils are still passive in their learning often due to a lack of pace and challenge. This is improving through school working group approaches.

Learning conversations are embedded in routines and the language of learning is beginning to emerge. An example of good practice is co-construction of success criteria being undertaken skilfully and successfully. This would benefit from being shared more widely in the school.

Praise is an ongoing highlight in classes which seeks to motivate and encourage all pupils and there are positive classroom displays throughout the school focussing on pupil learning, achievements and a focus of the revised school vision of Working Together and the values of Aspirational, Respectful, Healthy and Responsible.

Staff now have higher expectations of what young people can achieve in their learning. The work to increase the aspirations of young people is ongoing and based upon the previous work that has been done on the school vision and values and the progress being made with the Rights Respecting Schools agenda. There is an opportunity for the school to revisit the School Charter to ensure that this is fully embedded within the school.

There is a move to ensuring quality learning and teaching for all young people and there are good examples of pace and challenge in a few classes; this now needs to be fully embraced throughout the school to ensure there is a consistency across the school and to focus on improving attainment. Staff are beginning to have a greater focus on the development of skills linked to life, learning and work and some departments have ensured a proficient and explicit focus on this during lessons.

The school should continue to develop young people's understanding of what they do well and what they need to improve. There is opportunity to embed the work undertaken on vision and values and the school charter through the work of the prefects and also Student Voice. These are emerging as a positive vehicle for change within the school and ensuring that young people have a strong voice in school improvement.

There has been a focus on raising attainment through tracking and monitoring as well as developing improved learning and teaching approaches. Staff are benefiting from ongoing support and challenge in this area through sharing good practice, learning visits and support of professional discussion and enquiry.

Supporting and developing learners has driven the developments in UPS and learner pathways. This permeates all areas of the improvement plan and is beginning to embed positive relationships, interventions and mechanisms to ensure that the school is Getting it Right for Every Child. There are successful safeguarding procedures in place and the school is working towards further developing inclusion and wellbeing; a feature of this is the increasing partnership working within the school, community and agencies.

Curriculum

There has been a considerable focus on curricular improvements to allow for the school to improve attainment at all levels and to be able to ensure learner pathways are appropriate and varied.

The school is responsive in the use of pathways for young people. Included now within the curricular provision in the senior phase area are an increasing range of courses for young people; for example Engineering Science and People in Society.

There is emerging practice in learner pathways, including more Skills for Work courses, a number of young people undertaking Foundation Apprenticeships, an emphasis on Employability approaches and accreditation across the senior phase as well as young people undertaking Career Ready.

The school is continuing to focus on improvements in Literacy and Numeracy and in particular review the challenge periods to enable a rich experience for all young people within the broad general education.

The revision of the UPS provision is beginning to influence learners within the school and the role of the key adults should be progressed to ensure young people's attainment and next steps are tracked and monitored in a rigorous manner.

Moray Council are progressing with a restructure of the secondary school week and the school should use this opportunity to fully embrace the potential improvements in the curricular offer to young people, including parents and pupils in this process.

Leadership and Self Evaluation

Leadership and self evaluation has improved considerably with a review and subsequent embedding of the school vision, values and aims. The parent council and the school are working together in the community for the benefit of the young people. Teacher leadership, student voice and now teacher voice have ongoing importance within the school improvement agenda.

The Senior Leadership Team is creating conditions to develop leadership and collegiate working which will improve the capacity for change and improvement within the school. Senior leaders, including Principal Teachers, create collaborative conditions for staff to learn with and from others through critical enquiry and maximise all opportunities to support leadership of learning. There is now an opportunity to build middle leadership to take forward priorities and undertake self evaluation

There is effective strategic leadership within the school. The school should continue to use collaborative approaches to self evaluation using How Good Is Our School 4 in order to identify achievable priorities to take the school forward.

Conclusion

Since the initial inspection in 2015, the school is aware of the progress that has been made and the areas to continue to focus on for school improvement. The school Vision and Values are clear and understood; Working Together to be Aspirational, Respectful, Healthy and Responsible, and are being successful in supporting school improvement.

The headteacher and his senior leadership team work effectively and ensure a positive ethos within the school community, ably supported by staff, pupils, parents and partners.

The school is aware of its strengths and areas for development and has introduced key initiatives to drive improvement.

The school is well placed to continue with initiatives and will focus on the following in the future:

- Continue with the evaluation and improvement of the curriculum to ensure the needs of all learners are met
- Continue to ensure a consistent level of high quality learning and teaching
- Ensure there is a focus on the development of literacy as a responsibility of all across the curriculum

Keith Grammar School has worked on a considerable improvement agenda over the last two years and the impact of this is emerging. The priorities have been worked on rigorously in a collegiate and managed way, despite a range of challenges along the way. It is evident that this is embedded in the School Improvement Plan and the school is in a position to continue to build upon this with clear areas for continued improvement.

Moray Council will continue to support the school as part of the ongoing quality improvement programme.