

15 December 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Monifieth High School
Angus Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well young people are learning and achieving and how well the school supports young people to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including the impact of the school's work on Growth Mindset and resilience, the impact of the Monifieth inclusion pilot, and the school's work on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving young people's education.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

Young people learn and achieve well at Monifieth High School. They are polite, considerate of others and keen to learn. There is a very positive and caring ethos across the school and a climate of mutual respect between staff and pupils. Young people demonstrate a strong sense of identity with the school by proudly wearing their uniform. Almost all young people are motivated in their learning and work well on tasks and activities. When given the opportunity, they work well in groups and pairs, sharing ideas and supporting one another's thinking for example, in science. Young people in S1 and S2 were highly engaged in the *Team Maths* event which developed teamwork and problem solving skills well. We have asked the school to provide more opportunities for young people to learn with and from each other and to lead learning. Young people appreciate the opportunities they get in class and in form time to reflect on their learning. This is enabling them to talk confidently about their learning and the progress they are making. The school should ensure that these valuable conversations about progress take place more consistently across the school both in subject classrooms and in form time.

Young people's learning is enriched through a very wide range of opportunities for achievement beyond the classroom. A significant number of young people participate in and lead clubs and activities which include a range of sporting, cultural and creative activities. They make a very positive contribution to the life of the school and the local community. Many young people are developing leadership skills by taking on positions of responsibility such as prefects, buddies, and as members of school committees such as the charities committee, Eco-School group and Fairtrade

committee. Some are also acting as befrienders in the local community. Young people in S2 act as health buddies for children in primary 6. Senior pupils working towards their Sports Leaders UK Award run clubs for children in the associated primary schools. Young people are aware of their responsibilities as global citizens and are eager to get involved and make a difference to the lives of others. For example, the charities committee recently organised a day of fundraising for Syrian refugees and the school is working with Signpost International to support an orphanage in India. Young people who engage with the additional support needs resource base are fully included in the life of the school and attend a range of clubs, events and activities alongside their peers. They have also been successful at swimming galas, horse riding events and drama productions such as performing in the Limelight production of *The Wizard of Oz*. The school has a strong culture of promoting and celebrating achievements. Increasing numbers of young people are achieving recognition for their achievements through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, John Muir Awards, Saltire Awards, and sport and dance leadership awards. The school is rightly proud of its young people who achieve at a national level and recognises such achievements with their international tie. We have asked the school to continue to develop its approaches to monitoring young people's engagement and progress in these wider achievements. This will ensure all young people benefit from the opportunities on offer to help them develop important skills for learning, life and work.

The school has recently developed a promising new approach to monitoring and tracking young people's progress from S1 to S3. When fully embedded it should enable a clearer view of young people's progress from S1 to S3, across all curriculum areas, including their progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The attainment of young people at S4 and S5 in national qualifications has improved in recent years across a number of key measures. It is now in line with or, in a few measures, above the performances of other young people with similar needs and backgrounds in schools across Scotland. The school recognises that attainment can be improved further, particularly at S6. Most young people leave school with appropriate qualifications in literacy and numeracy although there is room for improvement in attainment of mathematics qualifications at Higher level. Almost all young people move on from school to a positive post-school destination such as further or higher education. Almost all young people in the additional support needs resource base are making good progress in their learning. They are developing greater independence and confidence with a few making very significant progress. Over the last three years all young people in the resource base have moved successfully on from school into a full time college place.

How well does the school support young people to develop and learn?

Most young people are appropriately challenged by the learning planned for them by teachers. However, in too many classes young people are asked to engage in activities that involve them all doing the same thing at the same pace and which do not meet their individual needs. Overall, the pace of learning could be brisker, activities more challenging and young people could be given more responsibility for their learning. We have asked the school to improve the quality and range of tasks and activities to meet the different needs of learners. Across the school, staff support young people well. They benefit from very positive relationships with staff. They feel

that they are well supported through the very caring pastoral care and support team. The school's work on positive thinking and resilience is raising young people's aspirations and self-esteem. The school is strongly inclusive. The learning needs of young people who require additional support are very well met through the inclusion hub and the additional support needs resource base. They are included in classes and the life of the school very well. Young people support each other well. Senior pupils provide high levels of support to individuals and classes for example, in physical education, numeracy, paired reading, form time and in the additional support needs resource base.

The curriculum is based on the school's shared aims of improving attainment, health and building community. From S1 to S3 young people build their skills progressively across all curriculum areas. Staff are planning effectively to develop young people's literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across learning. Young people have good opportunities to make connections across their learning and apply their skills through stimulating projects. For example, at S1 they plan and participate in the Eurofieth tournament and at S2 they apply their learning about sustainable energy to design an eco-home in the Living Spaces project. We have asked the school to continue to develop curricular links with its associated primary schools to ensure learning in S1 builds on prior learning and is appropriately challenging. At S3, opportunities for choice allow young people to learn in more depth. This is supporting young people well to continue to enjoy a breadth of learning while extending their knowledge and skills before moving into the senior phase. A range of learning pathways are available in the senior phase which are providing opportunities for all young people to achieve. These include courses that develop skills for work in partnership with Dundee and Angus College such as early education and childcare, travel and tourism and construction. Staff have broadened the range of courses available in the senior stages by developing options such as financial education, photography, music technology and environmental science. They have also developed a wider range of units and courses at National 1 and 2 levels to ensure that all young people are successful in attaining national qualifications. The school's work on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce demonstrates a strong commitment to working with partners and improving young people's employability skills at all stages. Very positive partnership working is evolving and this should continue to be a priority for the school.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher demonstrates very effective leadership. She is highly visible around the school and is well respected by staff, young people and parents. She sets high expectations and has a clear vision for improving the school. Together the senior leadership team provide strong collective leadership of the school and support for staff. All staff demonstrate their commitment to improving outcomes for young people. They use a range of effective approaches to evaluate the quality of their work. These self-evaluation activities are leading to well-measured improvements. We have asked the school to ensure self-evaluation and school improvement have a renewed focus on learning and teaching to improve the consistency of high-quality learning and teaching across the school. Staff enthusiastically take on leadership roles and participate in a range of well-focused professional learning opportunities. The school should now ensure learners have a stronger voice in improving the school. There is also scope to

develop further the role of parents and partners in school improvement. The school has a sound knowledge of its strengths and areas for development and demonstrates significant capacity for continued improvement.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Motivated and articulate young people who are keen to learn and have a strong caring attitude to others.
- The inclusive support across the additional support and pastoral care teams.
- The leadership of the headteacher and her team in bringing about improvement.
- Staff willingness to lead whole school developments which impact positively on young people's experiences and achievements.

We discussed with staff and Angus Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Continue to improve the consistency of high-quality learning and teaching to take account of different learning needs.
- Continue to improve attainment.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Angus Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Mary Byrne
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/MonifiethHighSchoolAngus.asp>

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