

28 February 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Bo'ness Academy
Falkirk Council**

In December 2015, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Falkirk Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

Ensure that the use of self-evaluation evidence focuses on improvements which will have the greatest impact on raising attainment.

The headteacher, relatively new in post, has made a very strong start in raising expectations of what young people can do and achieve. He has established a strong and clear vision for Bo'ness Academy reflected in 'Be the best you can be'. Aply supported by his deputies, he has established a clear sense of direction and purpose for the school. The senior leadership has now provided greater clarity about the school's priorities for improvement. School improvement groups have made a promising start to driving forward many of these priorities. The views of young people and parents continue to be gathered through questionnaires and focus groups. They now receive more effective feedback on how their views are informing improvements in the school. Since the last inspection there has been a significant change in staffing. Almost all faculty leaders are new in post and are providing a strong role in driving forward improvements within their respective departments. This has energised the school and enabled changes to be implemented. Leaders at all levels should ensure that these changes are carefully monitored and result in improvements for young people. The deputy headteachers, through their faculty links, will continue to support and challenge staff appropriately to secure improvement across the school. Considerable work has been undertaken to improving learning and teaching in the school. Staff have welcomed more formal arrangements to work in teams and share good practice across the school in learning and teaching. We found young people more engaged in their learning and aware of what they were learning. They demonstrate greater respect to each other

and staff. However, the variation in quality of learning and teaching continues to be an area for improvement at Bo'ness Academy.

Review and improve the curriculum to meet the needs of all young people better and improve their progress and attainment.

At S1 to S2, the curriculum provides a broad general education, but does not yet ensure that every young person experiences the full breadth to their learning by S3. Staff should continue to develop the curriculum to ensure that young people receive their entitlement to a broad general education. Senior leaders following consultation with young people, parents and staff have various options to ensure that this entitlement is fully met. Young people continue to have opportunities to make connections across their learning through projects. The school have worked successfully with partners such as Forth Valley College to expand the number and range of courses on offer to young people from S4 to S6. They now need to review the design of the senior phase curriculum to allow young people to attain as highly as they can. Whilst there is no overall trend of improvement in the school's performance in National Qualifications, there have been improvements in exam performance of those in S4 and S5. We have therefore asked staff to focus on improving the achievements of all young people, including attainment in National Qualifications. The school should continue to refine its system for monitoring and tracking young people's progress from S1 to S3 to help sustain improvements in attainment. Senior leaders also recognise the need to have a clear overview of young people's progress from S1 through to S3 across all curricular areas.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Falkirk Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 18 months of publishing this letter. We will discuss with Falkirk Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Guch Dhillon
HM Inspector

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