

10 May 2016

Dear Parent or Carer

**Hermitage Academy
Argyll and Bute Council
Dates of visit: 17 and 18 March 2016**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I visited your child's school. This was a follow-up to our visit in December 2015. We wanted to find out more about the changes in the school following our involvement in the local authority review.

During our visit we met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Parent Council. We also talked with staff from Argyll and Bute Council, the headteacher, senior leadership team, principal teachers, teachers, parents and young people. They told us about the changes which have been made in the school following our previous visit.

We offered all parents the opportunity to meet with us or speak to us by telephone. Some parents took up this opportunity and we would like to thank them for their involvement in the process. We would also like to thank the staff who took the opportunity to meet with us at a drop-in session.

Since our previous visit to the school, working with Argyll and Bute Council, all school staff have worked very hard to implement a wide range of changes, in addition to their on-going work, within a short timescale. Parents and young people are appreciative of the different ways in which teachers support their learning, for example, through the provision of supported study at lunchtime, after the end of the school day and through the spring holiday break. Not all young people take up these useful opportunities to further their chances of success in national qualifications. Whilst it is still too early for us to evaluate if the work done by the school will lead to sustainable improvements in outcomes for young people, we think that the school has made progress with many aspects of the action plan which they developed following the curriculum review. We identified a number of improving areas including the following.

- The tracking and monitoring of young people's progress from S4 to S6 is now providing more information to better inform pupils and parents about their progress.
- The identification of young people who are at risk of under-achieving is better.
- The range of interventions in place to address under-achievement has increased.
- A curriculum framework which allows young people to specialise in their third year has been developed.
- The SQA presentation policy has been reviewed to ensure increased flexibility for young people.

We are unable to comment on the experience of young people in lessons as this was not part of this visit.

We discussed with the school senior leadership team and staff from Argyll and Bute Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Monitor and evaluate the changes to the curriculum regularly and rigorously to ensure that they provide effective progression pathways and meet the needs of all young people.
- Improve further the communication and engagement with parents, staff and young people.
- Continue to work with staff to ensure that the assessment information from S1 to S6 is robust and founded on a clear understanding of standards.
- Develop further all staff's understanding of young people's progress towards qualifications.
- Monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of the interventions to address under-achievement.
- Improve the use of social media to communicate with and engage parents, share young people's learning, and celebrate their successes.
- Review i-time to ensure it is having a positive impact on young people's learning.

We discussed with members of the Parent Council the ways in which they are trying to ensure that they represent the views of all parents.

What happens next?

The school community now needs a clear and shared understanding of the future direction for the school. This will require a sustained and committed effort from parents, staff, young people and Argyll and Bute Council. As a result of this visit, we think that the school continues to need additional support from Argyll and Bute Council to make the necessary improvements.

As part of Education Scotland's Local Partnership Agreement, our Area Lead Officer will continue to work with Argyll and Bute Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact with the school to review progress. We will return to carry out a further visit within six months of the publication of this letter. We will then issue a letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Morrison
HM Inspector