

7 January 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Meldrum Academy  
Aberdeenshire 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 raising attainment, partnership working and transitions. 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 very well within an inclusive and supportive environment. They feel safe and well cared for and are confident staff will provide help and support when needed. They engage very well in lessons and enjoy learning at school. Young people work well together in pairs and groups, supporting each other and learning together. They make very good use of an impressive range of information and communications technology (ICT) to research their ideas and enhance their learning. Young people feel valued and the school is keen to seek their views and take them into account. Staff share the purposes of lessons with young people, encourage them to work to the best of their ability and build their self-confidence. Young people are becoming more accomplished at reflecting on their own learning and recognising the skills they are developing. In some classes, young people are involved in discussing and agreeing their next steps in learning. This is helping them to become more independent. There is scope to make this good practice more consistent across the school. Young people's learning is enhanced through a wide range of experiences beyond the classroom such as trips at home and abroad, visits and participation in events, competitions and challenges.

Young people are highly active contributors to the life of the school and the wider community. Through a wide range of opportunities provided by the school, they are developing skills and attributes to prepare them for life and work. Many young people have notable success in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. They support a range of activities in both the school and the wider community such as sports coaching and volunteering in care homes and the local youth club. Young people, particularly those at S6, develop skills in leadership through roles such as number and book buddies, sports leaders, prefects, lunchtime monitors and pupil peer supporters.

Young people with additional support needs are developing a range of life skills and building their confidence by working in a local community café. Across the school, young people are developing confidence and performing skills as they take part in musical concerts and shows. Young people benefit from a range of sporting activities which improve their fitness levels and develop team-working skills. Individuals and groups achieve some notable successes at local, national and international level in a range of events, including dance, athletics, tennis, basketball, football and rugby.

In national examinations, by the end of S4, young people perform overall above the national average in key measures. The attainment of young people at S4 could be further improved. By the end of S6, young people perform above the national average and there are some important trends of improvement in the numbers of young people attaining Highers and Advanced Highers. Over the last three years, almost all young people have left school to enter further and higher education, training or employment. The school needs to continue with plans to collate information on progress from S1 to S3 to inform actions which will further improve attainment and achievement for all young people.

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

Within Meldrum Academy's inclusive learning environment, young people are supported very well to develop and learn. Staff have a very good knowledge of the needs of learners and use a range of well-judged strategies to support young people in lessons. The school is continuing to develop its approaches to improve further the level of challenge in learning for young people. Arrangements to identify additional support needs ensure young people receive appropriate support to make progress in their learning. Support for learning staff work very effectively with class teachers to plan programmes to meet the needs of young people requiring additional support. The pastoral care staff work very well together, and with community learning and development staff, to nurture and support the young people in each of their house groups. Pupil support assistants are highly valued members of the school community and provide well-targeted support to individuals and groups of young people. The school works very well with a range of partners to improve outcomes for vulnerable young people.

Staff are making very good progress in continuously reviewing and improving the curriculum to reflect the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. The S1 to S3 curriculum is designed very well to improve young people's skills for learning, life and work. This includes effective approaches to developing young people's literacy and numeracy skills and health and wellbeing across their learning. New approaches and courses are in place in curriculum areas to provide young people with opportunities to progress well in their learning. The Capacity Building Courses provide opportunities for young people to use and further develop a range of skills outwith subject contexts. The curriculum from S4 to S6 provides an appropriately broad range of options which meet the varied needs of young people. The curriculum is very well enhanced by strong partnership working, including with the Parent Council and a very wide range of partner organisations which broaden the young people's experiences. The school has worked very effectively with local primary schools to improve transition from primary to secondary education. Targeted support is offered through the Bridging Project to enable identified young people to settle in easily at secondary school. Post-school

transitions are well organised and provide almost all young people with effective pathways into higher education, further education, work or training.

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

Staff use a range of approaches to evaluate and improve the quality of their work. They have a strong commitment to improving outcomes for all young people. The school self-evaluation calendar describes a continuous cycle of activities which effectively informs improvement planning. This includes lesson observations, focus reviews of faculties, thematic reviews and rigorous analysis of examination results. Staff regularly seek the views of young people and parents to inform improvements. Teachers' continuing professional learning is very effective in supporting improvements to learning and teaching, and staff share their learning well. The headteacher, depute headteachers and faculty heads provide strong leadership for school improvement. They encourage staff to be reflective and take forward new ideas to improve outcomes for young people. The school now needs to focus on those improvement priorities which will have the greatest impact on improving the achievements of all young people, including attainment in national examinations.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The ethos of the school as an inclusive community with mutually supportive relationships.
- Confident and articulate young people who are proud of their school and enjoy their learning.
- The enthusiasm and commitment of staff to develop their professional practice to improve outcomes for learners.
- Vibrant and strong partnership working which extends learning opportunities for young people.

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

- Further develop the use of self-evaluation evidence from across the learning community to focus on improvements which will have the greatest impact on improving the achievements of all young people.
- Continue to improve monitoring and tracking of young people's progress across the school ensuring effective support to develop their skills as independent learners.

### **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 evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified aspects of innovative practice which we would like to explore further. As a result, we will work with the school in order to record the innovative practice and share it more widely.

Carol McDonald  
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/MeldrumAcademyAberdeenshire.asp>

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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