

11 January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education are currently carrying out visits to some schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland. When we wrote to you after the last inspection of Inverurie Academy, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a visit to Inverurie Academy. Our engagement helped us learn more about how young people and their families, have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support young people's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and local authority officer the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from our original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit.

### **Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19**

Following the period of school closure between March and June 2020, Inverurie Academy developed a refreshed improvement plan, reflecting changed circumstances and priorities. This was adapted slightly during the summer of 2021 to reflect the changing context. The school has created a recovery plan to support a return to a more normal experience of school following the pandemic.

The school has experienced significant impact from COVID-19, with senior leaders managing periods of absence of staff and young people. The disruption has also provided staff with the opportunity to make significant progress with areas for improvement identified as a result of the previous school inspection. Senior leaders and staff have successfully tackled the challenges of the pandemic alongside moving to the new community campus, after an initial delay. The new building provides modern facilities for learning and is highly valued by staff and young people. They report a stronger sense of community and purpose, with a clear focus on learning.

The wellbeing of young people has been the central concern of all staff throughout the pandemic. Senior leaders have introduced a range of targeted measures to support individual learners and their families. School staff kept in touch with young people to monitor their wellbeing. Principal teachers of guidance played a key role in ensuring that learners are taking part in online learning.

### **Progress with recommendations from previous inspection**

Staff have paid strong attention to ensuring that young people are able to make progress in their learning throughout the pandemic. Approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school is now more robust. This is helping teachers to improve their professional practice in teaching, learning and assessment. They have reflected on their practice during the first period of school closure and made important revisions which supported learners well during the second period of school closure. They evaluated the quality of remote learning by

undertaking surveys of young people to identify an appropriate balance of teacher-led and independent learning. Staff have developed further their approach to making sure that young people are on track to succeed in their learning. As a result, the attainment of young people in the senior phase is now more in line with comparable schools. Staff have also introduced a wider range of courses so that young people have more options as they move through school. As a result, staff, learners, parents and carers are able to make better informed decisions to ensure that young people can follow appropriate pathways that meet their needs and aspirations for the future. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that all young people are provided with opportunities to undertake these courses. The school is now very well placed to continue its improvement journey.

### What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are implementing plans to support recovery. Staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. Aberdeenshire Council will continue to inform parents about the school's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service.

David Drysdale  
HM Inspector