

18 November 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Sgoil Lionacleit
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**

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 skills for work, the S3 health project and how teachers' assessments are supporting learners. 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 enjoy learning at school and feel that they are treated with fairness and respect. Almost all demonstrate a high standard of behaviour. They are friendly and courteous. Most young people feel safe and cared for in the school. They are self-motivated to do well and are enthusiastic when their learning experiences are varied and well-paced. Such experiences are not yet frequent enough across the school. There needs to be a greater range of learning approaches where young people can take more responsibility for their learning. They would also benefit from greater challenge in some classes. There is a strong focus on promoting young people's interest in skills connected to the islands, for example boat building and crofting. Young people's learning is enriched and enhanced through a very wide range of experiences to achieve beyond the classroom. These include sporting, musical and cultural clubs and activities like participation in local, regional and national competitions with the athletics team, Pipe Band and the recent trip to the First World War battlefields in Belgium and France. A group of pupils improved their technical and creative skills and confidence achieving success in the Best Production category of the national FilmG competition. In taking part in trips to the mainland and foreign countries, young people gain valuable skills in travel, independence, modern languages where appropriate and the social skills required to take part in residential experiences.

Overall from S1 to S3, most young people are making satisfactory progress through their broad general education. In most measures, young people in S4-S6 in Sgoil Lionacleit are attaining better than other young people with similar needs and backgrounds. As young people leave the school, their performance in key measures

in literacy and numeracy is higher than young people with similar needs and backgrounds in other schools. Almost all young people leave school and go on to employment, training or further study.

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

Relations between teachers and young people are very positive and young people with more complex additional needs are well supported. Overall, teachers provide most young people with appropriate tasks in most lessons. They plan most lessons at whole-class level and, as a result, tasks and activities are not always challenging enough for all young people. Information and communications technology is used well to support learning in some subjects. Support for Learning staff are developing a helpful format for evaluating young people's progress. The school has clear systems for prioritising specialist support and resources which ensure young people requiring additional support get the help they need. Partners, including the school nurse, health visitors and the nurse from the child and adolescent mental health service provide strong support for individual young people and their families. Support for young people with more complex needs is a strength of the school's work. We have asked the school to review how it meets the needs of all young people across the school.

In developing Curriculum for Excellence, the school has established a clear rationale for how the curriculum from S1 to S3 supports young people to progress with their learning. It should continue to work with parents, young people and partners as it develops further learning in the senior phase. Teachers are improving their approaches to developing literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across the curriculum. The curriculum has played a part in helping the school to close the gap between the highest and lowest achievers. Parents would like a clearer indication from the school as to how opportunities for young people to learn languages will be developed further in the future. The school collaborates well with partners including the NHS and Skills Development Scotland to deliver vocational courses based in the school, Lews Castle College and outdoor locations. All young people in S3 have a vocational experience and can choose from courses such as crofting, energy, early childcare and mechanical engineering. Enterprise activities are well-planned and contribute well to young people's ability to add to the local economy. All young people in S3 have a work experience week and young people have further opportunities for such experience in S5 and S6. This helps to develop their skills and readiness for the world of work. Young people with complex needs have a very good range of well-supported, sustained work experience opportunities. They are learning vocational skills in local businesses including preparing and serving food in a café, car valeting at a local garage, general hotel work and enterprising skills through setting up and running a nail bar. All young people participate in an enterprise project every year. The 'Include-Us' project helpfully supports young people to start and develop small social enterprises.

Commendably, all young people continue to learn Gaelic, building on their experiences at the primary stages. There are a few opportunities to develop fluency across the curriculum. The review of programmes for Gàidhlig in S1 and S2 has resulted in teachers accurately identifying ways in which young people's fluency could be improved. The school now needs to develop further its approaches to

embedding Gaelic. In doing this, staff should ensure that more young people continue with Gaelic at the senior stages and are more aware of the benefits from doing so.

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

The school has developed a number of approaches for monitoring the quality of young people's learning experiences and their progress. In several faculties, principal teachers or senior staff observe young people's learning in the classroom. The Teacher Learning Community, in which over two-thirds of staff participate, provides valuable opportunities for staff to share good practice, learning from each other. In order to make further improvements, senior staff need to share their high expectations clearly and do more to improve the consistency of young people's learning experiences across the school. There is scope to improve the effectiveness of approaches for monitoring young people's progress, including from S1 to S3. This will help to ensure all young people achieve as highly as possible. Staff recognise that they should gather, and take account of, the views of young people, parents and other partners more effectively.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Young people's achievements in a range of areas which expand their learning beyond the local context.
- The use of local skills to develop vocational aspects of the curriculum which help young people, including those with complex needs, to reach a positive destination.
- Partnerships with specialist staff to support individual young people and their families.

We discussed with staff and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve approaches to tracking and monitoring young people's progress from S1 to S3.
- Improve opportunities for young people to take more responsibility for their learning.
- Improve approaches to self-evaluation to ensure they lead consistently to improvements in young people's learning and attainment.
- Continue to develop a vision for Gaelic Learner and Medium Education which ensures opportunities for young people to develop their skills in the language.

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 some improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. As part of the school and council's reporting arrangements, parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.

Gary Johnstone
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/SgoilLionacleitEileanSiarWesternIsles.asp>

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