



# **The Gordon Schools Progress Report to Parents September 2019**



## **Context of School**

The Gordon Schools has a roll of 660 pupils and lies in a large rural catchment area in Aberdeenshire with 12 cluster primary schools. The school has a positive ethos with the learners being proud of their school.

The school was first visited in October 2016 and was revisited by Education Scotland in November 2018; the main areas identified for improvement were:

- Continue to improve the consistency and pace of learning and teaching across the school to enable all young people to experience high quality learning.
- Improve teachers' understanding of their roles and responsibilities in supporting all young people to have high aspirations and the best understanding of their health and wellbeing. This will provide the best platform for all young people to achieve success.
- Build on the early developments started by the new headteacher to develop a shared understanding of strategies for raising attainment. Improve the use and tracking of assessment to help all young people make appropriate progress.
- Develop all teachers' responsibilities in the process of tracking and monitoring young people's learning and skill development, particularly in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Teachers, particularly pastoral support staff, should use this process to help to raise expectations and improve attainment.

Following the further inspection visit in November 2018, it was agreed that the school had made some progress since the original inspection and taken forward some important improvements. The school needed time to evaluate these changes to ensure outcomes for young people are continuing to improve. As part of their on-going support, it was decided that officers from Aberdeenshire Council would carry out a review of the school within one year. Inspectors from Education Scotland would join their team. This was undertaken in September 2019 and this report informs of the progress being made by the school.

### **Continue to improve the consistency and pace of learning and teaching across the school to enable all young people to experience high quality learning.**

The school has undertaken a significant amount of work in continuing to develop the vision of 'Together Growing Succeeding'. There is evidence of staff having bought into this good foundation and there is a growing enthusiasm for supporting this to be embedded into the life and work of the school. The Senior Leadership Team remits are based on the vision and the school's merit system is now more focused due to its links to the schools vision.

There is emerging evidence of improved consistency around learning, teaching and assessment in classes. Middle leaders need to be more involved in the review and improvement of practice in all classrooms. This needs to be undertaken in a systematic and planned manner. The newly developed classroom observation pro forma is a good start to improving consistency, but this would benefit from being refined to ensure clear areas for focus. All staff would benefit from being involved in considering the focus for classroom observations to ensure improvement in practice.

In some faculties there has been good progress with pupils taking responsibility for their own learning and setting targets. Differentiation is now more of a feature across learning experiences. Pupils are more involved in planning their own learning, but this now needs to take place across all curricular areas.

The development of the “Learning Together” framework, led jointly by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Middle Leaders, is continuing the conversation about providing high quality leadership opportunities for all young people. All staff will be engaging with this process and carrying out an evaluation of its success with a view to identifying any next steps. There are plans in place to engage with pupils via Pupil Council and pupil focus groups in relation to this to ensure there is a shared understanding across the school for effective learning, teaching and assessment. This work will feature in the agreed framework for ‘Learning Together’.

The SLT are now engaging pupils in the quality assurance work of the school, including questions around learning and teaching. It is intended that all pupils will be surveyed through a new set of questions in each of Terms 1, 2 and 3 with a focus on the Broad General Education in Term 4. The data will be shared with both pupils and colleagues each term in order to identify strengths and next steps around learning, teaching & assessment as well as ethos.

**Improve teachers’ understanding of their roles and responsibilities in supporting all young people to have high aspirations and the best understanding of their health and wellbeing. This will provide the best platform for all young people to achieve success.**

The newly formed Senior Leadership Team has made a very good start to moving this main area for improvement forward. The DHT with responsibility for Health and Wellbeing has instigated weekly House support meetings and 1:1 sessions with the Principal Teachers of Guidance. There will be a clear focus on ensuring equity for all learners and accessing support when required.

The MCR mentoring programme, funded through the school’s Pupil Equity Funding provides an offer of support to young people. All care experienced learners, together with pupils identified as requiring this type of support, receive an offer of input from this programme. The programme includes small group work throughout S1-3 and mentoring aimed at the Senior Phase of school. This initiative is still at an early stage but it is hoped that it will improve outcomes for care experienced young people.

The wellbeing indicators are now more of a feature of school life. They are particularly well used in PE and PSE. School staff need to develop a whole school

Health & Wellbeing Strategy with the wellbeing indicators being more embedded in the life and work of the school.

The Rector has led a review of the school's anti-bullying policy and this has been replaced by a new Promoting Respect and Equalities Policy (PREP) which has widened in focus in order to take account of key aspects of equality and all protected characteristics. This policy was developed in consultation with students, parents, staff and partners. This policy clearly details roles and responsibilities regarding tackling bullying incidents. As part of the launch, a 'Report and Support' campaign has been initiated which provides clarity for young people and families as to the mechanisms and routes to access support. Additionally, an appropriate recording/action taken log has been introduced to monitor all reported instances of bullying and discrimination. This information will be used for tracking and monitoring purposes. Outcomes are logged, patterns are observed, and information will then be used to review the effectiveness of the new Promoting Respect and Equalities policy. The new policy now needs to be further developed to include clear procedures for further embedding a culture that champions the prevention of bullying and the promotion of positive relationships, rights and respect. Further work is required to develop consistent approaches to universal support across the school.

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy was updated in August 2019. This updated policy and guidance has been disseminated to all staff. The policy will be reviewed annually and new developments in child protection will be incorporated as required. All training is also updated accordingly. As part of the Child Protection training on the first day of this Session, information regarding the responsibilities for GIRFEC and Prevent were shared with staff. Posters are clearly displayed throughout the school highlighting the names of the Child Protection Coordinator and the Depute Coordinator.

**Build on the early developments started by the new headteacher to develop a shared understanding of strategies for raising attainment. Improve the use and tracking of assessment to help all young people make appropriate progress.**

**Develop all teachers' responsibilities in the process of tracking and monitoring young people's learning and skill development, particularly in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Teachers, particularly pastoral support staff, should use this process to help to raise expectations and improve attainment.**

The DHT with responsibility for Attainment and Achievement has led the development of a whole school Raising Attainment Strategy. This strategy supports middle leaders to consider pupils who are requiring support and challenge, ensuring appropriate strategies are put in place. The next step is to have a whole school strategic overview of attainment and to evaluate the impact of any interventions. The senior leadership team should continue the positive start to ensure that all staff take ownership of attainment data to ensure the best possible outcomes for all young people.

The school trialled the SEEMIS Progress and Achievement module for Aberdeenshire. Staff have made a good start to tracking data. However this is not being used in the same way across all departments. The next step is to involve all staff in moderation discussions before working with other secondary schools. This should ensure that successful strategies are laid out appropriately. Teachers need to make better use of Curriculum for Excellence National Benchmarks across the school to plan timely and appropriate formative and summative assessments which inform appropriate learning interventions for young people.

## **Conclusion**

Since the initial inspection in 2016 the school is aware of the progress that has been made and the areas that they need to work on to continually improve. The vision Together Growing Succeeding is a good foundation to help the school move forward with more focus and in a timelier manner.

The newly formed Senior Leadership Team are already working very effectively together and have a clear direction for the school. There is a renewed optimism across the school community.

The Gordon Schools is well placed to move their priorities forward. They will focus on the following:

- Continue to develop a whole school Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Continue to develop their Learning Together Framework
- Develop leadership opportunities and accountability of all

In the last three years The Gordon Schools has worked on a large improvement agenda and the impact of this work is starting to emerge. There have been a number of challenges but there is a clear direction and there is capacity to build on some good foundation work.

Education Scotland are satisfied that the school with the support of Aberdeenshire Council Officers has the capacity to move forward and therefore will make no more visits to the school. Aberdeenshire Council will inform parent/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.