

22 January 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Black Isle Education Centre
The Highland Council**

In May 2011, HM Inspectors published a report on your child's education centre. Recently, as you may know, we visited the centre again. During our visit, we talked to young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff how the centre has continued to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in May 2011 and at aspects of the centre's work, as proposed by the headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out how well young people are now learning and achieving and how the centre is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

The centre has gone through a significant period of change since the original inspection. No new admissions to the centre are being made while the education authority considers how best to support young people across the authority. As a result, the numbers of young people and staff at the centre have reduced. Young people in attendance feel safe and looked after. Most relate positively to staff who are finding ways for them to be engaged more actively in their learning. Most young people are now beginning to develop skills for life and work through improved links with colleges and work experience in the community. This could still be developed further. Staff have made a positive start to broadening young people's opportunities for personal achievement. Young people are now beginning to benefit from having more time for their learning. A few young people have improved aspects of their behaviour and attendance. However, the quality of young people's achievements are limited by the short school week. Young people are beginning to make progress towards newly devised learning targets. A few make appropriate progress from their earlier levels of attainment. Staff recognise, however, that the majority make too little progress and are working hard to improve this.

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

Young people now have a clearer focus on developing their understanding of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, including their social and emotional wellbeing. Staff are beginning to look at ways of developing skills through real life contexts to help make learning more meaningful for young people. Staff are becoming more confident with Curriculum for Excellence. However, they need to

make more progress in improving the curriculum, as much of this is still at an early stage of development. Young people still do not have enough access to information and communications technology to support their learning. In classes, staff have some helpful information on young people's additional support needs. However, this information needs to be more robust. Staff have recently improved the quality of young people's individualised educational programmes to help track progress in learning. The education authority is taking forward plans to ensure all young people benefit from better coordinated planning across council services. Young people now benefit from a wide range of services that support their learning effectively. The newly-appointed development officer has made good progress in improving communication between the service and mainstream schools. This will help staff to provide support at an earlier stage. Staff are developing ways to ensure that young people transfer confidently into the service and back to mainstream schools.

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

Positive steps have been taken to help young people become clearer on what they have to do to improve and what is expected of them. Staff are strongly committed to making further improvements and to establish a positive ethos in the centre. The education authority have carried out a full review of the centre and have appointed an acting headteacher to give clear leadership for the changes needed. Staff need to continue to involve parents, partners and young people more actively in improving the quality of the centre's provision.

What happens next?

The centre has made some improvements since the last inspection. The education authority has carried out a full review of the centre and it now has a much clearer focus for improvement. Plans are now in place to use the centre more widely to support children with social and emotional difficulties across the education authority. There are better arrangements for improving young people's learning through greater involvement of partners. However, a number of aspects including curriculum, attainment and attendance still need to improve more. We will carry out another follow-through inspection visit within one year of the publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the centre has continued to improve.

Sadie Cushley
HM Inspector

Please contact us if you want to know how to get the report in a different format, for example, in a translation. You can contact us at enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us at BMCT, Education Scotland, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact 01506 600200, or write to us at the above address or e-mail: feedback@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk.