

4 March 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Black Isle Education Centre
The Highland Council**

In May 2011 and January 2013 HM Inspectors published a report on your child's school. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school 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 school has continued to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in May 2011 and January 2013 and at aspects of the school'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 school is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

Young people are motivated when they engage in active learning and practical activities. Their learning is now supported by an improved learning environment with improved spaces for learning. In the teaching kitchen, most young people are motivated by working towards their food hygiene certificate. In the bicycle workshop, young people are enthusiastic when designing and making a bike ramp. Young people respond well to the caring and positive relationships with staff and feel safe and happy in their classes. They are beginning to work cooperatively with others and have opportunities to work in pairs and groups. They help and support each other through well-targeted encouragement from staff. Young people are more involved in setting targets for their behaviour. Overall, young people's attendance and engagement in learning has significantly improved. The centre has improved links with employers and mainstream schools. A few young people are working towards National Awards. The centre is aware of the need to improve this further.

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

Young people are benefiting from a good range of relevant and engaging learning experiences organised by the service and partners. For example, they now have positive links with the Forestry Commission. Young people have opportunities for achievement that include outdoor education and enterprise activities. Staff and young people have begun to personalise approaches to learning through using learning logs which are beginning to record young people's views on their progress. Young people now have opportunities to develop skills in literacy and numeracy

through well-planned real life contexts. The centre is aware of the need to improve how it tracks young people's progress to ensure a breadth of learning. The centre needs to have clearer plans for young people's progress and achievement in the senior phase. Young people benefit from the small class sizes which allows staff to better meet their learning needs. The key worker system is helping provide young people with individualised support. Teachers and support workers choose relevant and suitable tasks and activities. Young people's support needs are beginning to be identified more accurately. There is now closer partnership with other agencies to help support young people. The service and partner agencies are improving coordinated planning to meet young people's needs more effectively. Young people and parents are now more effectively involved in planning and reviewing targets within individualised educational programmes.

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

The service continues to improve its work. The attendance of most young people and engagement in learning has improved. The acting headteacher and the new staff team have put in place a range of strategies to review and improve the service. Staff are improving provision through working with a wider range of partners. Young people are now more involved in improving the service. Their views on the service are helping influence changes and improvements. The service is better placed for taking forward self-evaluation with a focus on key outcomes for young people, including raising attainment and further developing the curriculum.

What happens next?

The Black Isle Education Centre has taken forward a number of improvements since our original inspection. The service is becoming more successful in delivering a broad general education through a range of motivating contexts for learning. There are better links with mainstream schools and employers to support young people. The centre recognises there is still work to be done in delivering a broad general education and planning for the senior phase. Where appropriate the centre should continue to build on young people's ability to achieve national certification for achievements. There is still uncertainty over the future leadership of the school as the current headteacher is temporary. With continued support from the education authority, the service has the capacity to improve further outcomes for young people who face barriers to learning. We will request a report from the education authority, within one year of the publication of this letter, on the degree to which the service is continuing to improve. Depending on the progress which has been made, we will consider whether or not to carry out any further inspection visits. Parents will be informed about the progress made.

Sadie Cushley
HM Inspector

Please contact us if you want to know how to get the letter 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.