

Grove Academy



Report of Extended Review 19th – 21st September 2016

Dear Colleagues

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your preparation and involvement in the school's recent extended review.

Quality Improvement in Dundee is set within a framework of proportionate support and challenge. Each year a number of schools are selected to participate in the extended review process. The purpose of the extended review is to validate the school's self-evaluation and to help the school secure continuous improvement by supporting and challenging educational provision and development.

During the time the Education Team spent within the school, it gathered information by:

- Reviewing and analysing attainment and whole school data;
- Talking to the HT, SMT and staff;
- Talking to learners, parents/carers and partners;
- Observing aspects of learning and teaching;
- Reading and analysing relevant documentation – e.g. policies, plans, pupil documentation/information, roles and remits, audit evidence, record of collegiate time etc.;
- Sampling learners' work

The following report outlines the strengths and aspects for development as an outcome of the review. An Action Plan will be formulated by the school to address the aspects for development highlighted by this report which will continue to be monitored and evaluated by the Head Teacher and the school's link Education Officer.

I look forward to your continued commitment in securing these improvements to enable us collectively to deliver a quality educational experience in which all children and young people aspire to reach the highest personal levels of attainment and achievement.

Regards



Michael Wood
Executive Director
Children & Families Service

How good is our leadership and approach to improvement?

1.1 Self-Evaluation for Self-Improvement

Level: 4 (Good)

The school is committed to using self-evaluation as an integral part of the process of continuous improvement and has articulated clear plans for extending its use. A collegiate approach to consultation, involving all staff across the school, is apparent and working groups have been established to address whole school priorities. A willingness to reflect regularly on progress and to identify next steps is demonstrating impact.

The Quality Indicators in *How Good is our School? (4th Edition)* are being used by the SLT in their weekly strategic meetings and by departments in framing their improvement plans based on the school improvement plan. Staff, parents and pupils are consulted on the improvement planning process.

Classroom observations are an essential source of information on the quality of learning and teaching with teachers expected to analyse lessons as part of the process of identifying improvements. There is a well-developed, structured programme of classroom observations in place. Feedback is used to share best practice and to structure the in-house professional learning programme.

Teachers are encouraged to self-evaluate as part of the annual Professional Review and Development process. Progress with agreed learning goals from previous reviews are also reviewed and discussed.

Participation in the Teacher Learning Community and Professional Learning Community is developing a staff cohort which is mutually supportive and reflective. These groups continue to attract both new and regular attendees. Sharing and self-reflection are core to these groups. Increasingly the groups are playing a central role in the development and delivery of In-Service activities and Professional Dialogues. Staff are also encouraged to look outwards, to share best practice, challenge thinking and to participate in professional discussion to further inform areas for improvement.

It is evident that data from several sources, including INSIGHT, Dartington, MidYIS, SOSCA and the SIMD, is being used more extensively to support self-evaluation. In addition, an audit across the school using *How Nurturing is our School?* is currently being undertaken.

Strengths

- The collegiate approach to the development of the school improvement plan and its links to departmental improvement plans
- Weekly strategic SLT meeting focuses on self-evaluation
- Regular “link” meetings between SLT and Principal Teachers, using a structured agenda with a focus on improvement.
- Head Teacher’s “5 a Day” encourages young people to share their opinions, particularly with regard to learning and teaching

Aspects for Development

- The school should adopt a more consistent approach to quality assurance across the school, with all Principal Teachers taking an active role in monitoring learning and teaching
- Increase engagement with parents/carers and partner agencies to include them in the improvement cycle
- Continue to extend opportunities for pupil voice in relation to continuous improvement and revisit the structure and purpose of the PRC.

1.3 Leadership of change

Level: 5 (Very Good)

Supported by a highly effective senior leadership team, the Head Teacher provides strong leadership in driving forwards school improvement. Staff feel included, involved and engaged in collegiate whole-school processes for determining school improvement priorities and in both leading and supporting their implementation. A number of school working groups, including the school's strategy and development group, provide a range of distributed leadership opportunities for staff who report feeling empowered in supporting the school's journey of improvement. The school's SLT has been successful in managing the pace of change particularly in relation to the implementation of curriculum for excellence, relevant pedagogy and the evolving senior phase and associated national qualifications. Staff, parents and importantly young people are fully aware of the school's vision and handful of values. In addition to providing a strong foundation for curriculum design and delivery the values serve as a daily compass for supporting pupils and their learning. In continuing the management of school cultural change, the Head Teacher and senior leadership team have made good progress in developing an inclusive culture in parallel with GIRFEC developments. In extending such developments, the continued formation of inclusive/adaptive classrooms will be supported by staff engagement with the ABLe assessment and intervention framework and specifically the classroom environment map.

A strong sense of staff commitment to change leading to improved outcomes for all young people pervades the school community. Ably supported by the Principal Teacher for Improving Learning and Teaching, the school's Teacher Learning Community and Professional Learning Community provide excellent opportunity for professional discussion, learning and self-evaluation. A formal professional dialogue programme successfully augments such approaches. The Head Teacher's '5 a day' meetings with pupils are valued by staff and pupils and successfully inform school priorities for improvement. Outcomes from such meetings support a culture of praise in the school with positive and immediate feedback offered to staff by the Head Teacher. Principal teachers value the solution orientated support and challenge provided by link DHTs.

In successfully implementing an evolving broad general education and senior phase curriculum, principal teachers and staff continue to demonstrate significant professionalism.

Strengths

- The school's bedrock of values and focus on quality learning and teaching.
- The effective leadership of the Head Teacher and senior leadership team.
- The impact of the Principal Teacher for Improving Learning and Teaching in driving forwards effective learning and teaching and associated professional learning for staff.
- The commitment of staff to school improvement and the range of distributed leadership opportunities available to staff in leading and supporting school improvement priorities.

Aspects for Improvement

- In line with identified school priorities, accelerate improvements in whole-school / cluster approaches to improving numeracy outcomes for young people throughout the broad general education and senior phase.
- Extend opportunities for pupil voice in shaping school improvement priorities.

How good is the quality of the care and education we offer?

2.2 Curriculum

Level 5 (Very Good)

Grove Academy's curriculum model has been carefully planned to allow progression for young people to attain at the highest level possible. There is clear evidence that ongoing developments in the curriculum are taking account of recent national and local guidance. The Curriculum Working group has developed Grove Academy's curriculum ensuring there are opportunities available for all young people across the 4 contexts of learning – Subject Areas, Ethos and Life of the school, IDL and wider achievement. Recent developments in S2 IDL, S3 Masterclasses and KIKO Employability Skills are as a result of an evaluation of curriculum provision. Staff have ownership in developing the curriculum.

There is a cultural shift throughout the school towards extending opportunities for learning across a range of contexts to prepare young people for their future e.g. the introduction of the Apprenticeship Programme; S2 IDL, S3 Masterclasses, NPA in Cyber Security, Baccalaureate programme and the I-Gem initiative. The school has ambitious and innovative plans for developing digital learning across the school including joint projects with a school in USA and engagement with Microsoft to expand learning opportunities for young people. The school has developed a range of learner pathways to demonstrate the range of opportunities available for young people in Grove Academy, which is helpful in supporting discussions with pupils and parents.

In delivering the universal entitlement to support for pupils, the school provides young people with an opportunity to meet with a tutor teacher twice a week. A structured programme is in place enabling young people to be involved in for example, learning conversations and charity work. The school has a range of partners who are beginning to plan learning with school colleagues. There are many opportunities for young people to extend their learning outwith the school, e.g. the SFA Coaching Academy, S2 taster sessions at D&A College, work experience, Duke of Edinburgh and Saltire Awards for volunteering.

The school has considered the priorities of Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing and has implemented a range of curricular interventions to support improvements in these areas for example, Fresh Start programme, Scottish Studies Award, additional period of Numeracy in S1 and the Youth Philanthropy Initiative.

Strengths

- Leadership of curriculum planning and development through the curriculum working group
- Curriculum planned across the 4 contexts for learning
- Ambitious and innovative plans for further developing the curriculum
- The evolving number of learner pathways available to young people to better meet individual learning needs.

Aspects for Development

- Following evaluation, further develop the S3 Masterclass programme to include opportunities for assessment and feedback to allow young people to reflect on their learning and the skills they have developed
- Following evaluation, extend opportunities for the study of Level 4 E's and O's within the S3 Masterclass programme
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of tutor time to ensure it adds value to young people's learning and their entitlement to support
- In the proposed revision of the learning and teaching policy, the school should articulate its strategy for Literacy and Numeracy as a whole school responsibility.

2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Level 5 (Very Good)

From the 60+ learning episodes observed, we found that young people learn and achieve very well through a wide range of positive learning experiences. They feel safe, respected and included and are proud to be part of Grove Academy. At all stages, relationships between staff and young people are consistently positive and high expectations communicated as part of the school ethos. In almost all classes, young people are well behaved and engaged in their learning. Young people enjoy learning and have very positive experiences across the school. They feel that they are treated with fairness and respect and view staff as caring and approachable.

In accordance with the school's focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching, a number of teachers have successfully driven forward changes in pedagogy including the introduction of co-operative learning strategies. The application of such approaches is not yet, however, consistent across all departments. Where well-crafted learning intentions are outlined, pupils are clear about what they are learning and are engaged, however the team observed a number of lessons where these were not evident. Very good examples were noted in relation to the planning for social goals and skills. Where co-operative learning was effectively deployed, it had a positive impact on both pupils' enjoyment and engagement in their learning. The majority of lessons are well planned and varied with active pupil engagement in a wide range of interesting activities with some examples of excellent practice in evidence. Successful approaches include good use of collaborative and co-operative learning strategies in some subjects to extend pupils' literacy abilities. Whilst there are notable strengths in the way that young people learn and achieve, with the pace of learning generally good, there could be more opportunities for young people to be challenged.

Teachers should continue to provide opportunities for learners to reflect on and evaluate their learning. In a wide range of classes, young people benefit from opportunities to work together in pairs or groups. Some use of hand-held technology was observed although there is a need for greater consistency of opportunity. Although pupils were actively involved in a number of lessons, a 'teacher led' approach was more commonly adopted. In some lessons, there was a lack of formative discussion with young people to help them identify their strengths and next steps.

The school is working hard to enable young people to develop a broad range of skills for learning, life and work with young people particularly excelling in cultural, musical, sporting, volunteering and leadership activities and events. A number of young people have gained recognition at national and international level.

Strengths

- Very positive relationships evident and mutual respect demonstrated between staff and young people.
- A very caring, supportive and inclusive learning environment with widespread use of praise and encouragement
- Responsible, courteous and confident young people
- Pupils' contribution to the wider local and global community
- Staff commitment to providing a rich and broad programme of extra-curricular opportunities to enhance pupils' achievement

- Through the Home Learning Policy, the school is actively promoting young people as independent learners.

Aspects for improvement

- Extend opportunities for learners to reflect on and evaluate their own learning
- Continue to encourage the consolidation, sharing and extension of excellent practice in learning and teaching and co-operative learning strategies and where required the articulation of learning intentions
- Continue to encourage young people to take increased responsibility for their own learning including individual accountability when working co-operatively with others
- Continue to extend opportunities for learners to develop higher order thinking skills through extended questioning
- With the support of the ABLe classroom map, extend approaches to differentiation to better meet individual learning needs.

How good are we at ensuring the best possible outcomes for all our learners?

QI 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement

Level: 5 (Very Good)

Pupil attainment at Grove Academy at the point of leaving school is consistently very good with average total tariff points above virtual, Dundee City and national comparators. Young people in Grove Academy are confident and able to effectively contribute to discussions in a reflective considered manner. Almost all of the young people are able to demonstrate achievement through the four capacities and have developed, or are developing, skills to enhance their life chances. Young people in Grove Academy, through various events, overseas trips and activities are aware of their place in a global society.

Whilst the majority of subject departments provide engaging learning experiences for pupils, there are some specific subjects which require to provide more challenge to the young people to effect improvement. The new tracking and reporting system which has been developed and introduced should begin to address this at the same time as opening up more dialogue between teachers and the young people and their parents/carers. The Head Teacher has made a good start towards ensuring that Insight data is being used across the school by practitioners at all levels.

Young people have made positive progress in their attainment in literacy at SCQF level 4. At SCQF level 5 literacy consistently compares favourably with the virtual comparator. Numeracy attainment at SCQF level 5 in 2012, 2014 and 2015 is significantly lower than the virtual comparator. Improvement in numeracy attainment is a significant area of development for the school. In accordance with existing plans for improvement, the school should consider targeted interventions throughout the Broad General Education for young people at risk of not achieving National 4 numeracy at the point of exit from school.

Early indications are that teaching staff are beginning to use ABLe to ensure that all young people have an equitable access to their education. The support for pupils team should provide further opportunities to help teaching staff to develop a deeper understanding in the use of ABLe to ensure that all young people can achieve to their highest level.

Through work with employers, Dundee & Angus College, Abertay University and other partners, the school excels at ensuring young people enter a positive destination and is always in line with or better than its virtual comparator. Through the senior phase parental information evening, the school has made a good start to increasing parental understanding of the different options within senior phase pathways.

Strengths

- Literacy at level 4 is consistent with the virtual comparator over time
- Literacy at level 5 outperforms the virtual comparator over time
- Almost all learners consistently enter positive destinations upon leaving school
- The increased opportunity for wider achievement awards and in a range of vocational qualifications
- A consistently high standard of attainment across almost all subject areas.

Aspects for Development

- The school should review its whole school strategy for improving pupil attainment in numeracy led by the Principal Teacher of Mathematics, supported by the Mathematics department and the Senior Leadership Team
- Collation and use of data to support “early intervention” in numeracy with specific pupils/groups of pupils
- Increase rigour in the BGE in numeracy to prepare young people more fully to achieve SCQF level 4 by the end of S4
- In line with the school’s monitoring and tracking procedures, ensure early intervention strategies are utilised for pupils at risk of not achieving SCQF level 4 numeracy prior to leaving school.