25 March 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

Selkirk High School
Scottish Borders Council

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 and others shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, such as how well the school ensures young people understand their strengths and next steps in learning. We also looked at how effectively opportunities for wider achievements are contributing to young people’s development. 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?

Most young people enjoy learning, are respectful and relate positively to staff and to each other. They feel safe and secure in the school. Most young people listen attentively, contribute to discussions and answer questions confidently. In most subjects, young people participate well in a range of learning activities including group research, presentations and practical tasks. Young people have opportunities to reflect on what they are learning and, in discussions with their teachers, they are getting feedback about how they can improve. Young people have a positive attitude to learning, particularly when given opportunities to influence how and what they learn. For example, in music and drama, young people are developing independent learning skills as a result of the choices they make. The school should provide more opportunities for young people to work independently and to take responsibility for their own learning. The school should plan activities and tasks that challenge young people’s thinking further. All staff should ensure that young people develop these skills in a planned and progressive manner. In some departments, young people use information and communications technology successfully to enhance their learning, for example in science and physical education. Young people at S6 contribute effectively to the life of the school and the wider community. A few young people elected from across the year groups represent the views of their peers at the Junior and Senior Council.

Young people value, and benefit from, participation in the school’s range of sporting, cultural and community activities. The S1 to S6 Exodus programme supports young people effectively to gain valuable skills for learning, life and work, as well as a sense
of personal achievement. Senior pupils demonstrate the ability to lead and take responsibility in their roles as Sport Ambassadors and through their S6 committee work. A few young people at S6 are working with ‘Face2Face’ drug and alcohol workers to prepare and deliver a unit to raise awareness of drug and alcohol issues to children in P7. Through the traditional music school, young people develop their performing skills effectively by participating confidently in a range of local and national festivals and competitions. The school has a strong focus on developing health and wellbeing through a variety of activities including participation in a range of sports like rugby, hockey and equestrian events. The school recognises young people’s achievements well, including the use of accredited awards and should now consider how best to track and record these more formally. It should provide more opportunities for young people from S1 to S5 to develop leadership skills. Whilst the school does not yet have a clear enough view of young people’s progress from S1 to S3, it has plans to further develop this area. This includes progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. In almost all key measures, attainment from S4 to S6 is in line with schools serving those with similar needs and backgrounds. From S4 to S6, overall, young people’s performance in national qualifications is above the national averages. At S5, young people’s performance shows a declining trend across all key measures. The school is aware of this aspect and is taking steps to address it. At S4-S6, young people achieve well above the national average in some subjects at Standard Grade, Higher and Advanced Higher. The number of young people moving into positive destinations on leaving school is significantly above the national average and in line with schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds.

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

In a few departments, the pace of lessons is brisk through activities that develop independent learning skills and meet young people’s needs. Across the school, more teachers need to provide greater challenge in tasks and activities in lessons. They need to take more account of the needs of all young people, including those who attain highly. Teachers work well with Additional Needs teachers and assistants to meet the needs of those young people who require support in their learning. Additional Needs staff identify and assess young people’s support needs very effectively. One way is through their strong links with associated primary schools. They offer a good range of programmes to help young people improve their skills in reading and numeracy. They work closely with departments to support teachers, for example they plan and deliver lessons alongside class teachers to meet young people’s learning needs. The pastoral team support young people effectively in many ways, including providing helpful advice and guidance through one-to-one interviews. The School Support Forum uses a good range of specialised approaches to support young people with additional support needs.

Through its curriculum, the school aims to provide experiences that enable all young people to reach their full potential and develop into caring and confident adults, in line with Curriculum for Excellence. Overall, it provides a broad general education for young people from S1 to S3. Staff are continuously reviewing and developing the curriculum over time. As part of their ongoing review, staff should continue to ensure that all young people have suitable progression routes that build appropriately from S1 to S3 and on to S4 to S6. The school has successfully developed its individualised
curriculum for many young people. The school offers young people the opportunity to study rural science or horticultural at all year groups and has allotments and greenhouses for related practical work. Staff have made a positive start in planning learning across different subject areas to help young people make connections and see the relevance in their learning. Across the school, staff are supporting young people well to develop their literacy skills. The school is in the process of developing plans to develop and assess progress in numeracy and health and wellbeing. The school should continue to improve the variety of courses and programmes on offer to cater for young people’s needs from S4 to S6. Currently, young people at S5 and S6 are not receiving their entitlement to religious and moral education. The school’s curriculum is enhanced well through a range of strong contributions from partners, particularly by the Community Learning and Development (CLD) team. For example, the CLD team work jointly with the school to plan and deliver the skills for life programme. The school needs to continue to work with partners to ensure effective planning from S4 to S6. The school has well-planned approaches to ensuring children are supported when they move from P7 to S1. It should develop further its curricular links with associated primary schools to ensure young people can build on what they have already learned.

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

The school has developed suitable approaches to review learning and teaching, curricular developments and to raise attainment. The headteacher has a clear vision for improving the school. Staff have begun to lead and take on responsibility for improving aspects of the school’s work. They are working with other schools in their learning community on joint developments which help all teachers improve their teaching approaches. Whilst teachers share ideas informally, the school should establish more formal ways to share good practice. The headteacher, depute headteachers and faculty heads carry out some lesson observations and provide helpful feedback to staff. Further lesson observations and reflection on good practice would help to improve the quality of young people’s learning experiences. Departments are developing their own systems to track and monitor young people’s performance and to identify how well young people are progressing. The senior management team needs to continue to ensure that quality assurance activities lead clearly and consistently to improvements and make a difference to the work in the school. The school should also review its joint approaches to quality assurance with a view to having partners involved in the planning of school improvements. This would help to ensure that partners’ contributions enhance further young people’s learning and progress. Parents are involved successfully in school improvements in a number of ways through discussions, curriculum meetings and the work of the Parent Council.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Respectful and courteous young people who have a positive attitude to learning.
- Strong attainment in some subjects.
- High-quality support and care for all young people.
We discussed with staff and Scottish Borders Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Raise teachers’ expectations of achievement and provide greater challenge in lessons.
- Continue to develop the curriculum to meet the learning needs of all young people more effectively.
- Continue to ensure that quality assurance approaches lead clearly and consistently to improvements in young people’s learning experiences and achievements.

**What happens at the end of the inspection?**

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that many of the school’s self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Scottish Borders Council will inform parents about the school’s progress.

Hakim Din
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/SelkirkHighSchoolScottishBorders.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/SelkirkHighSchoolScottishBorders.asp)

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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Quality indicators help schools, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the publication *How good is our school?*. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Selkirk High School.

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<tr>
<th>Improvements in performance</th>
<th>good</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learners’ experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting learning needs</td>
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We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The curriculum</th>
<th>satisfactory</th>
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<tr>
<td>Improvement through self-evaluation</td>
<td>satisfactory</td>
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