

**OFFICIAL: Continuing Engagement – Record of Visit  
Brechin High School: Angus Council: SEED No 5307236**

**Continuing Engagement - Record of Visit (ROV)**

**Purpose and audience**

- This document (called the Continuing Engagement – Record of Visit or ROV) is provided within one working week of the publication of the letter to support the headteacher/head of centre in leading improvement. The findings and evidence in the ROV provide detail which will be helpful in guiding further planning and implementation of improvement.
- The ROV is provided for use by the education authority and headteacher/head of centre to which it refers. It is a technical document designed for use by education professionals.
- The ROV is not intended to be copied and distributed in its entirety. Headteachers/heads of centre should use their judgement in sharing particular sections of the document confidentially with others as appropriate to their areas of responsibility and interests.

**Contents**

- The ROV is the set of notes used by the inspection team for the discussion of findings meeting on the final day of the continuing engagement visit. It may also contain further information that was prepared in advance of the meeting but which may not have been required in the discussion.
- The information in this ROV has been checked and edited to ensure that individual members of staff below appropriate levels of seniority and individual learners, or small groups of learners, cannot be identified and that it conforms to Scottish Government guidelines on the disclosure of data.
- The ROV is not an exclusive record of all of the evidence which underpins the evaluations as expressed in the published letter, and should not be regarded as such.

**Sources of evidence for the ROV**

- In all inspections, inspectors visit learning activities in contexts appropriate to the establishment. They observe learning experiences and teaching, and talk to staff and children about learning and achievement, and other aspects as appropriate to the inspection. Inspectors evaluate children's achievements in different aspects of the curriculum, using direct observation, sampling of learners' work, and additional data as appropriate to the sector. Inspectors also have a range of professional discussions with staff who have responsibility for managing the

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educational provision, and other staff as appropriate. They take account of stakeholders' views, including those gathered through pre-continuing engagement questionnaires when these are used in a continuing engagement visit, and discussions with parents and other members of the community, as appropriate to the sector.

- Continuing engagement visits begin with the senior staff of the establishment sharing their self-evaluation evidence with the inspection team, showing how they are bringing about improvement. This evidence contributes to evaluations of the progress made since the original inspection.
- The ROV may contain references to the way that Curriculum for Excellence is being taken forward in the context of the establishment. This may include progress in planning, prioritising and reviewing the curriculum, through the use of self-evaluation and improvement planning, and in applying key ideas and principles from Curriculum for Excellence. It may also include how the centre is working with partners and with its own staff to enable them to learn together to develop their understanding of Curriculum for Excellence ideas and put them into practice, supported by a plan for continuing professional development. There may be references to how Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes are being used to improve learning and achievement and how individual teachers are contributing to literacy and/or numeracy and aspects of health and wellbeing. The ROV may also refer to how staff identify and measure improvements in learners' experiences and in standards of achievement; how they communicate with and involve parents, and how they collaborate to plan and support learners' progress. The extent to which references to Curriculum for Excellence are made in the ROV will depend on the range and nature of the areas for improvement which were previously set out in the letter sent to parents following the original inspection and which are used to shape the continuing engagement visit.

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<b>School/Centre Name</b>	Brechin High School
<b>Education Authority</b>	Angus Council
<b>MI undertaking visit</b>	Mary Byrne
<b>Date(s) of visit</b>	19 February 2018
<b>Letter publication date</b>	1 May 2018
<b>ROV sharing date (date ROV is sent out to EA/HT/HoC/CPPC)</b>	4 May 2018

Improve the quality of learning and teaching.

**Learning and engagement**

- The headteacher successfully shares his vision for a continuously improving school community with young people, staff, parents and carers. There is clear agreement from stakeholders about the current improvement priorities of raising attainment through improved learning and teaching and developing leadership at all levels.
- In almost all observed lessons, staff and young people benefit from mutually respectful relationships. Young people are clear about the standards expected of them which are set out in the 'Brechin Standard' and shared through assemblies, 'Personal Learning and Planning' (PLP) and subject classes. In almost all lessons visited, classroom routines are well established and learning is purposeful and orderly. In a few lessons, the quality of learning is more variable and young people are disengaged from their learning. The school should continue to revisit standards and expectations for learning with all staff to improve the consistency of young people's experiences.
- Young people are able to articulate their understanding of the school values and aims which are regularly reinforced through assemblies, PLP lessons and the 'Brechin Standard'.
- The school has begun to target its most able young people through the 'T25' groups. However, there are still missed opportunities to provide these young people with tasks and activities that extend their learning. Some young people who are not part of the identified T25 learner group believe that their learning and progression is not equally valued and this issue needs to be addressed sensitively. There is a need to ensure that all young people receive appropriately challenging learning. Providing the most able learners with activities that challenge their thinking and promote skills development is a key aspect for the

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school to take forward.

- Most young people are very positive about the introduction this session of personal digital devices to support learning. They can identify a range of benefits to their learning such as, increased independence, a more personalised approach and the introduction of greater challenge within learning activities. A few teachers are using digital technologies in innovative ways to enhance learning. Young people recognise that there is a lack of consistency in the extent to which teachers in all curriculum areas use digital technology to support their learning. The school should continue to share practice more widely and support the capacity of staff to engage with digital technology.
- Young people know that their views are sought and listened to through, for example, planned opportunities in PLP sessions, online surveys and pupil focus groups, both within subject areas and across learner cohorts. Young people continue to require further support to develop the language of learning and an understanding of how to identify appropriately challenging personalised learning targets. There is evidence in a few subject areas that learners' views are acted upon and shape learning, teaching and assessment approaches.

**Quality of teaching**

- Learners from both the BGE and the senior phase comment positively on the recent increase in the range and variety of teaching approaches they experience across all curriculum areas.
- There is a strong commitment across staff to making sustainable improvements in learning and teaching. A significant investment in professional learning has led to an energised staff team who are motivated and willing to trial new methodologies. Staff willingness to engage with a greater variety of active learning approaches is evident across all curriculum areas and appreciated by young people. The impact of this on young people's learning and attainment is still to be realised. This is fully recognised by senior leaders.
- The focus across the school on improving the structure of lessons has led to more consistency in the use of starter activities, learning intentions and success criteria. There is scope to develop this further and ensure that all staff have a shared understanding of the purpose of these features in supporting the delivery of consistently challenging experiences for all young people. There are missed opportunities to use learning intentions to support learning effectively. More effective use of plenaries will enable staff to plan to better meet young people's needs. Providing young people with opportunities to identify their own success criteria will support learners in developing the language of learning and accessing appropriately differentiated learning.
- There is evidence of the impact of professional learning on effective questioning strategies. Skilful questioning techniques should be developed further to support

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and challenge young people in their thinking.

- The increase in active approaches to learning has led to an increase in learner engagement. Going forward, young people require more support in developing the skills required to work collaboratively with others if they are to deepen their own learning and develop as independent learners. An increased focus on the quality of the learning, rather than the process of learning, is a key improvement area for the school.

**Effective use of assessment**

- The revised approach to tracking, monitoring and reporting is providing increased information about young people's progress. The school recognises the need to revisit the process and the use of specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely (SMART) targets to ensure all young people receive high quality feedback. Young people identify a lack of consistency in the quality of feedback that they receive. A number of young people are unclear about the role of the 1 to 6 scale in identifying how well they are doing in their learning. The SMART targets included in reports are not yet adequately personalised to support young people to understand what they need to do to improve.

**Planning, tracking and monitoring**

- Staff are beginning to use a range of data including Curriculum for Excellence levels, Scottish National Standardised Assessments and senior phase performance data to plan interventions and improve outcomes for learners. Staff have a clear, shared understanding of their responsibility within their own subject area to use data to plan appropriate learning, teaching and assessment opportunities for young people. This is an area that requires further development in order to consistently support improvements in attainment for all young people.
- PLP is at an early stage in providing all young people with planned, regular opportunities to evaluate their learning. Young people value the opportunities it provides to reflect on their progress. Senior phase pupils recognise the contribution made to the development of study skills through the focus on learning within PLP sessions. Learners in the BGE have a better understanding of their progression in learning through Curriculum for Excellence levels. This has been a focus area for the school and requires further development.

Increase expectations of what young people can learn and achieve and raise attainment.

- The school has significantly improved its use of data to inform the analysis of performance and plan for improvements in attainment in both the BGE and the senior phase. Senior leaders clearly communicate high expectations about attainment targets and align improvement work to achieving these targets. All staff show a good awareness of their collective responsibility for raising attainment. They analyse data on department performance, participate in

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attainment meetings with senior leaders and regularly discuss tracking and monitoring data to identify young people who require additional support. Staff have been well supported to improve their understanding of attainment data through professional development work such as Insight training.

- In the BGE, tracking and monitoring procedures have been developed which are providing evidence of progress in Curriculum for Excellence levels across all curriculum areas. This has the potential to provide strong evidence of attainment over time. The school is now using data from P7, including evidence from standardised assessments, to monitor progress and to identify young people who require additional support or challenge in their learning. Senior leaders are proactive in sharing data from BGE tracking across all staff to raise expectations and inform professional dialogue about assessment judgements. Moderation activities have been a focus of staff development work. Staff have begun to use the National Benchmarks to inform this work and share good practice with colleagues at collegiate events. Staff should continue to develop approaches to assessment and moderation to ensure that tracking data in the BGE is robust and reliable and helps young people and their parents to understand the progress they are making.
- Senior leaders have identified targeted groups of young people to work with to address key areas for improvement in senior phase attainment. For example, performance of the highest attaining 20% is below the virtual comparator (VC). As a result, higher attaining young people are being identified from S1 through standardised assessments and achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels. Their learning and progress is being monitored to ensure pace and challenge meets their needs across the school. Other targeted groups include S5 leavers and young people with English as an additional language.

**BGE**

- Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (ACEL) data for 2016/17 indicates that almost all pupils at S3 achieved appropriate levels in literacy and numeracy. The school has begun to use data from Scottish National Standardised Assessments diagnostically to support young people to improve and to inform professional judgements. On-going moderation work in literacy and numeracy using the National Benchmarks will ensure that ACEL data is increasingly robust and reliable.

**Literacy and numeracy**

- Attainment in literacy of leavers is broadly in line with the virtual comparator (VC). In the latest year, the school has maintained or improved the percentage of leavers attaining at SCQF level 4 and above, SCQF level 5 and above (both for the unit and as part of a course) and at SCQF level 6.
- **Attainment in numeracy of leavers** is broadly in line with the VC except at SCQF level 6. The percentage of leavers attaining numeracy at this level has declined and in 2016 is significantly much lower than the VC. The school has

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broadly maintained attainment at SCQF level 4 and above and level 5 and above in the latest year. However, the percentage of leavers attaining SCQF level 5 and above as part of a course has declined over the latest three years.

- **In S4**, attainment in **literacy** is an improving picture overall and is in line with the VC. **By S5 and S6**, there are some improvements at SCQF level 5 and above and level 6 in the latest year. However, at SCQF level 6, attainment by S6 (based on the S6 roll) is significantly much lower than the VC.
- **In S4**, attainment in **numeracy** at SCQF level 4 and above as part of a course and SCQF level 5 and above as part of a course has improved in the latest year. Attainment in these measures is broadly in line with the VC. Attainment at SCQF level 4 as a unit is declining and is significantly lower than the VC in the latest year (2016/17). **By S5** (based on the S5 roll), there is little evidence of improvement at SCQF level 4 and above, level 5 and above and level 6. **By S6** (based on the S6 roll), there are improvements in attainment in numeracy across almost all measures and the school is performing in line with the VC.

**Attainment over time**

- The attainment of leavers (as measured by their complementary tariff scores) shows no notable improvement overall. In the latest year (2015/16), attainment of the lowest attaining 20% and the middle attaining 60% is broadly in line with the virtual comparator (VC). However, this is as a result of a decline in the VC rather than an improvement by the school. Attainment of the highest attaining 20% declined in 2016 to significantly much lower than the VC.
- **At S4**, the school has maintained the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% in the latest year (2016/17). It is broadly in line with the VC. Attainment of the highest attaining 20% is significantly lower than the VC in the latest year.
- **By S5** (based on the S5 roll), there are some signs of improvement for the lowest attaining 20% in the latest year. However, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% remains significantly lower or much than the VC.
- **By S6** (based on the S6 roll), attainment has improved and is broadly in line with the VC. The staying on rate to S5 and S6 is often significantly lower or much lower than the VC. Attainment by S6 is more positive when taken as S6 based on S6 cohort. Attainment of S5 based on S5 cohort is still significantly lower.

**Breadth and depth**

- **At S4**, attainment at **SCQF level 3 and above** is in line with the VC and has improved in the latest year for three or more to six or more courses. The percentage of young people achieving four or more and five or more courses at SCQF level 3 is significantly higher than the VC in the latest year (2016/17).

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Attainment at **SCQF level 4 and above** is in line with the VC and the percentage attaining two or more to six or more courses has improved in the latest year. The percentage of young people attaining one or more to three or more courses at **SCQF level 5C and above** is in line with the VC. The percentage attaining four or more to six or more courses at SCQF level 5C and above is significantly lower or much lower than the VC for the latest 2 years. However, there has been improvement in the latest year in the percentage of young people attaining two or more to five or more courses.

- **By S5**, the percentages of young people attaining three or more to seven or more courses at **SCQF level 5C and above** have declined in the latest year and are below or significantly lower than the VC. Attainment at **SCQF level 6C and above** has declined in the latest year. It remains significantly much lower than the VC for one or more to 4 or more courses and significantly lower for 5 or more courses.
- **By S6**, attainment at **SCQF level 5C and above and 5A and above** has improved in the latest year. The percentage of young people attaining two or more to five or more courses has improved from significantly lower or much lower than the VC to in line with the VC in the latest year. The percentage of young people attaining one or more to three or more courses at **SCQF level 6C and above** has improved steadily over the latest three years. It remains below or significantly lower than the VC. Percentages attaining five or more courses show little signs of improvement and some evidence of decline and the school is significantly lower than the VC in the latest year. **At SCQF level 7** the school has maintained improvements.
- The school's tracking data predicts improvements in attainment in this year's qualifications.

**Subject contributions**

- There are still too many subjects at National 5 and Higher where too few of those young people presented achieved passes at A to C. Senior leaders are aware of this and are closely monitoring departments.

**Attainment versus deprivation**

- Attainment of young people residing in areas of the most socio-economic disadvantage (as measured by their complementary tariff scores) is generally in line with the national figure (SIMD 2). Young people residing in areas of the least socio-economic disadvantage generally perform below, sometimes significantly lower than the national figure (SIMD 8 to 10). This becomes more apparent by S5 and by S6.

**Destinations**

- There has been a decline in the percentage of young people leaving school to go

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on to a positive destination in the latest year. This may be due to a decline in numbers going on to employment. There has been an improvement in the percentage of young people going on to higher education over the latest two years.

- The percentage of young people going on to a positive destination from S5 and from S6 has improved in the latest year but remains significantly lower or much lower than the VC. This is related to the low staying on rate in the school.

Ensure agreed targets for improvement are delivered through more effective leadership at all levels.

- Senior leaders identified the need for a change in culture and a strong aspirational, positive message about expectations. The headteacher led the widespread consultation on the development of the revised vision, values and aims and the 'Brechin Standard'. Posters of the vision, values and aims and the Brechin Standard are displayed prominently across the school. These are in use across the school community and referred to frequently by both staff and young people. Young people report that the 'Brechin Standard' is supporting mutual respect, as there is one set of rules for everyone. They speak appreciatively of staff willingness to adapt their practice to engage young people more actively in their learning. Partners, staff and learners all comment on the more calm and positive atmosphere in the school building. Young people are proud of their school. They are aware of, and welcome, members of the community in the building within the school day. They want their school to be seen in the most positive light by the community. Local partners, including Dundee and Angus College, health partners and employers, say they feel part of the campus and speak highly of their positive interactions with young people.
- The senior leadership team (SLT) maintains a strategic overview of the implementation of the school improvement plan (SIP), with an unrelenting focus on SIP priorities. To support this process, the SLT revised their remits to drive the three identified priorities. In planning their strategic approach to taking forward these priorities, the SLT has looked outwards to other establishments in the local authority and beyond. Senior leaders have made a considerable commitment to the continuous professional learning of staff to underpin this strategic approach.
- Members of the SLT work closely with their link faculties. Structures are in place to ensure that the school priorities inform all improvement planning within the school. This includes all planning at faculty and classroom level. Some members of the Extended Leadership Team (ELT) have joined the SLT to support the delivery and monitoring of the Quality Improvement Programme. The quality improvement calendar provides measures of success and milestones to support the delivery of the SIP priorities. There are weekly SLT and link faculty meetings, as well as regular attainment meetings, ELT meetings and faculty meetings.

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There are core agendas with standing items at each of these meetings. For example, attainment and tracking and monitoring. Middle leaders talk about a 'support and challenge' approach, driven by the SLT, but adopted by all members of staff. There are tight processes to support consistency that are closely monitored. The school also makes use of an extensive range of surveys amongst parents, partners and young people all linked to SIP priorities. Learning visits by both the ELT and SLT are focused on improvements in learning and teaching. As a result the school is able to evidence increasing progress towards achieving improvement goals.

- The SLT firmly sets expectations. They actively promote widespread ownership of the school priorities by all school staff and increased opportunities for leadership at all levels. Middle leaders are playing a key role in ensuring consistency in approaches to the delivery of priorities. They work closely with both senior leaders and classroom teachers and support staff. This contributes directly to the alignment of practice in the classroom within the school improvement agenda. Procedures for classroom management are now rooted in a whole school approach, which is being supported by staff at all levels and is resulting in fewer referrals for behaviour and supporting a more purposeful learning environment.
- Staff throughout the school speak very positively of the many opportunities for leadership that exist. Staff report that they feel empowered to take forward their ideas for improvement. Both teaching and support staff lead across the school in areas such as outdoor learning and improving the curriculum offer. Faculty heads and others have all undertaken professional learning in coaching techniques to support staff to develop and improve teaching approaches. Staff feel valued for contributions that are recognised and shared.
- As part of the focus on raising attainment, the school has expanded learning pathways. Work with partners has extended a range of learning pathways, including additional Skills for Work courses and Foundation Apprenticeships. This is a promising start. However, the school is aware there is still more development required to ensure that all young people experience appropriate pathways.
- There are increased leadership opportunities for young people. S6 leadership team now involves all members of S6. They participated in a two day leadership event, with a focus on developing skills such as team working, planning and money management. Young people in S6 describe how this has enhanced their experience of S6 and believe they are now better prepared for life beyond school. There are opportunities such as sports leaders and language leaders. A group of young people in S5 worked in partnership the local health group for locality needs to consider health services in the local community. As planned the school should extend these planned opportunities for leadership to young people in the BGE. Senior leaders should consider how best to map these leadership opportunities

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across all year groups, so that young people are aware of the skills they are acquiring.

- The school is developing approaches to involving young people in school improvement. Young people still feel that they could have a stronger voice.

**Safeguarding**

- Inspectors discussed child protection (CP) and safeguarding information with relevant staff. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Since the last inspection, the school has updated the CP briefing notice for temporary and supply staff to ensure they are clear about the school's CP procedures. It has updated the CP training presentation and developed clear child protection training records. Records of incidents of bullying have been developed and there are procedures in place for monitoring attendance and exclusions.
- Based on the evidence provided by the school we have agreed the following: ensure that all emergency medication is easily accessible.
- Discussion also took place around: the views of a few young people and parents who feel that the school does not deal effectively with bullying; and support planning for young people repeatedly excluded. The school should continue to develop practice in these areas.

**What happens next?**

The school has made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. We will ask for a report on improvements in attainment within one year. Angus Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its centres.