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**Dalkeith High School**

**Standards and Quality Report September 2021**

**What were our achievements in Session 2020-21?**

Our shared vision underpins all that we do in our school community and was developed in consultation with stakeholders.

*Dalkeith High School: Enabling all young people to succeed in an inclusive, respectful and stimulating environment*

The wellbeing of our wider school community has been at heart of all that we have done throughout the past school session as we have navigated our way through life in a global pandemic. This was evident in our approaches to the reopening of the school in August 2020 when we introduced risk mitigation measures to ensure the safety of our school population. The measures ranged from the introduction of appropriate hygiene procedures in each classroom to the restructuring of the school day to minimise interactions. The number of iterations of the school’s risk assessment documents clearly charts the measures that were introduced at key points in the pandemic in accordance with guidance from Scottish Government.

A clear focus was placed on supporting our new S1 pupils who were not able to experience the usual range of transition activities due to the first lockdown. Steps were taken to gather their views on starting at their new school through the 5-a-day programme. Very positive messages came from our young people, with almost all reporting that they had settled in well.

The second lockdown from December 2020 saw almost all of our young people return to online learning. The school very quickly established in-school Hub provision for children of key workers and for other pupils for whom there were wellbeing concerns. Staff volunteered to support the work of the Hub and very positive relationships were established that allowed for good support for those young people throughout a very testing time. The school noted an increase in the number of young people accessing this support in comparison with the first lockdown period. The Pupil Support Team continued to provide support for young people who were working at home utilising a range of support mechanisms. Positive feedback about the support provided was received from pupils and their families throughout.

From January 2021, staff provided high quality online learning opportunities for all pupils working remotely. The use of Show My Homework as a platform for all activities was invaluable and also provided for parental involvement in the learning process. The learning offer was of a higher quality that during the first lockdown in the spring/summer of 2020 with improvements made based on this early experience. Tracking systems were established, with appropriate interventions, to encourage as many learners as possible to continue with their learning. Again, very positive feedback was received about the quality of the learning opportunities, the clear communication with the school and the support given to pupils and parents/carers.

A key strength throughout the year has been the way in which the school has adapted its normal practice in response to the crisis, for example the move from in-person parental meetings to virtual platforms. The usual format of reporting to parents/carers was amended to provide families with as much information as possible, in particular to support transition points through the secondary school journey. Another example of this is the adaptions to the usual processes to support young people as they make decisions about learning pathways with reliance on virtual means of communication with pupils and their families.

The pandemic has been a huge challenge but it has also helped us to focus in on our core values and on the importance of young people’s wellbeing in supporting their readiness to learn. This has resulted in a number of key improvements leading to improved supports for mental health and wellbeing, including:

* Successful partnership with MYPAS to introduce and maintain a school counselling service
* Successful partnership with CAMHS to introduce an anxiety management course in the BGE (which will extend to the senior phase in August)
* The fundraising efforts of the senior phase mental health ambassadors in supporting SAMH
* All staff taking part in professional learning to continue to enhance their understanding of nurturing approaches and how these can be applied in the classroom context

Staff, pupils and their families coped well with the introduction of the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) produced by the SQA in response to the cancellation of the national exams. Evidence was gathered from an early stage on our return to school in August in anticipation of the cancellation being announced in October (Nat 5) and December (H/AH).

Attainment has continued to be strong at Dalkeith High School and our expectations of our pupils remain high. The Insight National Benchmarks released in February 2021 show a very strong set of results with Dalkeith High School outperforming virtual comparators in almost all measures.

The need for clear, timely communication with our pupils and their families has never been more evident than during the past year. The use of Show My Homework allowed for this communication with pupils about all aspects of their learning. The platform was also used widely by parents/carers. The introduction of the weekly newsletter issued by the Headteacher at the end of each week has been very well received by parents/carers with many compliments having been recorded.

The relationship with the Parent Council has been further strengthened by regular communication between the Headteacher and the Chair. The move to online meetings has increased the number of parents/carers attending the meetings of the Parent Council. The agenda is based around questions and suggested topics for discussion intimated by parents/carers in advance.

Staff participated in our professional learning day on Monday, 24th May at which we invited Mary Myatt, author of Back on Track: Fewer things, greater depth, and Bruce Robertson, author of The Teaching Delusion, to give the keynote speeches. Their input prompted professional discussion and debate about our priorities for further school improvements as we move forward. The main messages were shared with parents/carers at a meeting of the Parent Council two days later. Parents/carers also contributed to our evaluation of current and future practice. The School Captains also held Pupil Voice focus groups to capture the views of our learners about future improvement priorities. Our school community recognises that many of the changes made necessary by the response to the global pandemic have brought about unintended benefits that we would like to retain.

Leadership, at all levels, has been responsive, agile and compassionate to the needs of our school community.

We have evaluated our practice against the Quality Indicators in ‘How Good is Our School?’ The evaluations are noted below:

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| **Quality Indicator** | **Area of practice** | **Evaluation** |
| 1.3 | Leadership of Change | Very good |
| 2.3 | Learning, Teaching and Assessment | Good |
| 3.1 | Ensuring wellbeing, Equity and Inclusion | Very good |
| 3.2 | Raising Attainment and Achievement | Good |

**How do we know?**

Stakeholder views are sought through parent/carer questionnaires, pupil focus groups, staff meetings, Parent Council meetings and Midlothian Stakeholder surveys to ensure that our practice reflects our vision and values. The use of our well-established 5-a-day programme to ensure regular dialogue with young people to ascertain the extent to which are vision and values are embedded in our practice. This session, our School Captains have been leading the 5-a- day meetings and providing feedback to the Senior Leadership Team at regular intervals. The School Captains have also suggested pertinent topics for discussion at the5-a--day sessions.

Full consultation has recently taken place with pupils, staff and our families to determine our next steps as we move towards normalising practice made necessary by the response to the global pandemic. This has involved our School Captains facilitating Pupil Voice focus groups to find out their views about necessary changes to practice that has brought about unintended benefits that we would like to keep as we enter the new session and beyond. Discussions have also taken place with parents/carers. Representatives from the Parent Council attended our recent professional learning day alongside all staff to hear from renowned educationalists who stimulated our thinking and subsequent discussions. All of this has been pivotal in establishing our priorities for the future.

**What are our priorities for Session 2021-22?**

Our priorities are based on global, national and local priorities and reflect where we are as a school on our improvement journey.

* Continued focus on health and wellbeing of all in our school community
* Continued development of nurturing approaches
* Continued development of teaching and learning
* Continued development of digital learning strategy
* Continued focus on attainment for all learners
* Continue to engage in national and local conversations about curriculum and assessment
* Continued focus on staff professional learning and leadership development