



**Parklands School  
Helensburgh  
Argyll and Bute Council  
22 June 2010**

We published a report on Parklands School in April 2009. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in March 2010. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping children to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents<sup>1</sup>. Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well children and young people are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk). Where applicable, you will also find analyses of questionnaire returns.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

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### **1. The school**

Parklands School serves Helensburgh, Lomond and the West of Dumbarton. The school provides education for young people between five and 18, who have a range of additional support needs including multiple and complex needs, physical disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. At the time of the inspection, a management team from Hermitage Primary School had been temporarily appointed to lead the school. They had been in post since January 2010.

## **2. Particular strengths of the school**

- Positive influence of the current management team who have given the school a clearer sense of direction.
- Caring and nurturing learning environment.

## **3. How well do children and young people learn and achieve?**

Children and young people are beginning to be more actively involved in their learning. They are being offered more choice and are enjoying activities where they can gain independence, through planned community trips, local journeys and money handling. Children and young people are more involved in whole school activities which stimulate their interest. In the first class, children participate in play experiences but are not always engaged in active learning. Children are encouraged to explore learning through a range of approaches. A few of these approaches are not always relevant or stimulating enough for learners. Children and young people do not yet have enough opportunities to interact with each other in a meaningful way.

Young people are achieving success in a number of ways. They are making useful progress with individual learning targets and staff have started to collect evidence of these achievements. Staff have improved accreditation routes for all young people in the secondary stages. This has also improved the focus and purpose of learning for young people. More young people gained Access 1 and 2 level awards. Others are achieving well through Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses. A few young people are not challenged enough by the levels at which they are working.

Staff know children and their families well and have developed very positive and caring relationships. In a few lessons staff are able to

adapt activities and approaches to meet the needs of learners. Staff need to develop these approaches more consistently across the school. The school is starting to develop an environment where children are able to develop their communication skills more effectively. The speech therapist and staff have completed individual assessments and devised targets for each child. These do not yet show sufficient progression. Visual schedules are beginning to be used more effectively to support learning. Almost all children and young people have helpful communication passports to support their learning. Staff now need to develop a deeper understanding of the purpose of their work on communication.

Staff are at the very early stages of developing *Curriculum for Excellence*. They have adopted a more consistent way of planning their programmes but the pace of this development work has been slow. The curriculum is now broader and there are more opportunities for science and art activities. Lessons are not always relevant for children and young people. Staff have identified the need for an improved approach to movement programmes across the school.

#### **4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?**

Staff work very well with parents to support children and young people. Parents value the caring and nurturing environment provided by staff. The Parent Council works in close partnership with the school and has been involved in considering its future direction. All staff work effectively with a range of agencies to support learning. The school has established positive links with Clydebank College. Primary children enjoy very well established links with other local schools. This does not continue into the secondary stages. Staff have developed positive partnerships with local businesses to organise individual work experience opportunities.

## **5. Are staff and children and young people actively involved in improving their school community?**

Staff feel they are listened to and valued by the current management team. Teaching staff are now more involved in reflecting on their work together. Children and young people gain confidence from participating in the recently formed school council. They are involved with a local trust in redesigning and developing the outdoor area. The current management team and staff have made significant improvements to the environment for learning including attractive displays of pupils' work. Staff are now ready to be involved in more systematic approaches to evaluating the work of the school.

## **6. Does the school have high expectations of all children and young people?**

The school is developing a more purposeful ethos and all staff and parents acknowledge a better focus on learning. Expectations of young people's ability to achieve have improved, although many children and young people still need more relevant and challenging learning experiences.

## **7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?**

The current headteacher and depute headteacher have set a positive tone and pace for future improvement in the school. They have established a better sense of purpose around the school and have developed a positive approach to all aspects of school life. They have succeeded in promoting this attitude amongst staff and parents. As a result, staff are keen to improve the school's provision. Leaders and staff have identified the need to seek advice on developing teaching approaches to more effectively meet the complex needs of learners in the school.

## **8. What happens next?**

The school has improved some aspects of its work since the original inspection. The newly appointed management team along with staff have made a positive difference to the school in a short space of time. There remain significant areas for improvement. We will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress. We will carry out a further follow-through visit to the school, within one year of the publication of this report, and will report to parents on the extent of the improvement that has been achieved.

**HM Inspector: Angela Edwards**

22 June 2010

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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