



**Pinewood School
Blackburn
West Lothian Council
24 August 2010**

We published a report on Pinewood School in June 2008. 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 May 2010. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school¹ 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 parents². 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. Where applicable, you will also find analyses of questionnaire returns.

¹ 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

Pinewood School is a special school for children and young people with a range of additional support needs including autism. It serves the whole of West Lothian. There have been a number of staffing changes since the inspection in March 2008. A new headteacher took up post in February 2009 and a new depute headteacher was appointed in June 2009. The roll has increased significantly from 80 at the time of the original inspection to 103. As a result, four classes are now based in annexes in Blackburn and Polkemmet Primary Schools. An extension to the school is currently under construction.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Children and young people who are well cared for, happy and enjoy school.
- Positive and beneficial links with parents and developing teamwork with all staff and partners including allied health professionals.
- Use of communication strategies to help motivate and engage children and young people.
- The impact of the leadership of the headteacher and depute headteacher.

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

Children and young people are now more engaged in their learning, as a result they are achieving better. Across the school, staff are using symbols and signs more consistently. Children and young people have a better understanding of what is happening throughout the school day. Most are now aware of their learning targets. Helpfully, these targets have been developed using symbols to aid understanding. Staff have benefited from high quality professional development which has led to improvements in learning and teaching. Teachers are now planning better, to meet learning needs more effectively.

Staff have developed the curriculum well. They are beginning to use national guidance to improve the curriculum further. Links are developing well with local secondary schools and colleges to provide more opportunities and experiences for young people. Children and young people now have more opportunities to make choices in their learning. They can now gain more national qualifications. Increasingly children and young people are gaining important lifelong skills, for

example in using money and travelling independently. Senior young people run a healthy tuck shop which has increased their numeracy, and successfully developed skills in communication and teamwork. The school has worked effectively with local transport providers to increase the time for learning. All children and young people now benefit from two hours of high quality physical education each week.

4. How well do staff work with others to support children and young people's learning?

The school continues to work very effectively with parents. The Parents and Staff Teacher Association raised money to build an outdoor playground and replace the school minibus. More children and young people are benefiting from split placements with mainstream school. The school is now working better with allied health professionals, who feel more involved in the school. Therapists have delivered high quality training to staff which helps them to meet the needs of children and young people better. Therapists are now involved in helping to plan the curriculum and they are contributing to learning targets.

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

Staff have identified key priorities for improvement. They are keen to improve learning and teaching and work more with partners. Each week, they think about questions to help them improve their practice. The headteacher and depute headteacher evaluate teachers' planning and frequently visit classes to evaluate how children and young people are learning. Teachers visit each other's classes to observe and share effective practice. The school is developing more systematic ways of gathering views of parents, staff and pupils.

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

Staff now have higher expectations of what children and young people can achieve in their learning. The school now has a more positive ethos. Across the school, strategies to manage behaviour are used more consistently. Children and young people are now given more opportunities to mix with others in mainstream and other special schools. As a result, they are developing greater social skills and independence. School staff work effectively to develop understanding of diversity and celebrate difference. The school is developing stronger links with St Kentigern's Academy to allow young people to have opportunities to access a wider curriculum.

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

The headteacher is providing clear direction for the school. She shares her vision for the school very well. She is well supported by an able depute headteacher. Together, they form a very strong team. They are reflective and keen to further improve the school. Staff and partners work together better and there is a very strong sense of developing teamwork.

8. What happens next?

There is clear evidence of improvement since the original inspection. The curriculum, progress in mathematics and arrangements to meet children's learning needs are now at a satisfactory level or better. We will make no further visits in connection with the inspection report of March 2008.

HM Inspector: Elizabeth Morrison
24 August 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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