



**Baldrigon Academy
Dundee City Council
1 June 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, young people and the local community know whether their school provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with school staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the headteacher and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities which young people are involved in. We also gather the views of young people, parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well young people are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and young people work together and how they go about improving the school. We also comment on how well the school works with other groups in the community, including services which support young people. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns from young people, parents and staff, and details about young people's examination performance. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals. Where applicable there will also be a report on the learning community surrounding the school.

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

Baldragon Academy is a non-denominational school which serves Kirkton, Downfield, St Mary's, Ardler and the surrounding areas of Dundee. The roll was 615 when the inspection was carried out in March 2010. Young people's attendance had improved slightly and was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Increasingly confident young people who take pride in their school.
- The benefits to young people of well-planned initiatives which help them live safer, healthier lives.
- Staff commitment to improving the school and the effective partnerships with other agencies to support and extend learning.
- Staff's teamwork and positive relationships across the school which create a welcoming environment for learning.
- The work of the extended pupil support team to meet the needs of vulnerable young people and their families.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Most young people are attentive, well-motivated learners. They enjoy school and feel safe and well cared for. The school is helping them to grow in confidence. Young people are respectful to each other and to staff. In most lessons, they are encouraged to share their ideas and have begun to assess their own and each other's work. Young people show enthusiasm and take responsibility for completing challenging tasks when they work together. They use computers and other technology confidently to research and present ideas well. They need to be more fully engaged in activities that encourage them to think for themselves and reach solutions. In a few departments, individual young people benefit from detailed feedback on their learning. The school should continue to extend this practice so that all young people are better informed about their strengths and development needs.

Young people experience a wide range of opportunities to achieve new skills, raise self esteem and contribute effectively to the school and community. Many are developing creative skills and achieving awards through performances and musical events. Through the *Baldragon Broadcasting Group*, a number of young people gain skills in radio production, presentation and creative digital media. Senior young people take on responsibilities and leadership as peer supporters, prefects and school captains. A few young people are increasing their understanding of environmental issues through the John Muir Award and working in the school garden. The school promotes citizenship skills well. Young people demonstrate this in their successful fundraising to support a school in Malawi and many other charities. The school is aware of the need to ensure all young people benefit from these opportunities and achieve appropriate awards in recognition of their efforts.

By the end of S2, around half of young people achieve national levels in reading and mathematics. Less than half achieve these levels in writing. The school needs to address this. Too many young people are not making enough progress between P7 and the end of S2. By the end of S4, the school's results at all levels of Standard Grade, or equivalent, have shown improvement recently. Girls achievements at General level have improved significantly. As yet, there is no clear trend of steady improvement at S3/S4. At S4 and S5, the school's results are not as good as those in schools where young people have similar needs and backgrounds. Although results overall remain below the national average, there are promising signs of improvement. At S6, the number of young people achieving one or more awards at Higher or Advanced Higher level has increased recently. Overall, young people's attainment by the end of S6 has steadily improved in recent years. The proportion of young people who move on to Higher or further education has risen over the last three years. The proportion of school leavers entering employment is consistently high.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The school is currently reviewing the curriculum to take account of

Curriculum for Excellence. Staff aim to increase opportunities which maximise the potential of all young people. Recent priorities include courses in creative digital media, hospitality, business dynamics events and horticulture activities which promote important skills for work, learning and life. A few young people at S3 and S4 develop these skills through part-time placements at Dundee College. The school is currently seeking ways to extend these aspects so that more young people can benefit. However, too many young people currently follow courses which do not interest them or at levels not matched to their ability. Staff have created a range of activities which link learning across the curriculum. The S1 *Rapid Response* project, and a range of challenging, enjoyable activities for all year groups which increased learning about Africa, are good examples of this. There is a need to ensure the curriculum in S1 and S2 ensures continuity and progression in learning for all young people. Support for learning staff ensure that young people with additional support needs follow a suitably varied and stimulating curriculum. Young people's learning is enhanced through frequent educational excursions, visiting speakers and opportunities to work in teams to develop enterprise skills.

Across the school staff know young people well. They are sensitive to their social and emotional needs. Most teachers select appropriate resources and adapt lessons to meet young people's varying learning needs. The extended pupil support team works very well together in carrying out their specialist roles. They provide high-quality support which meets the needs of young people very effectively.

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

The school provides a welcoming environment for parents to engage with staff and to learn more about the school's work. Staff are helping a few parents to increase their literacy and numeracy skills. This is helping parents support their children better. Senior staff respond quickly to resolve complaints. Staff do not hesitate to involve other professionals if it helps young people. Most parents are happy with the school. A minority think the school could keep them better

informed about their child's progress. A significant number of local business people and community partners support young people's learning. Hospitality students have benefitted from the expertise of a local chef in the classroom. Volunteers from *The Shore*, a beauty therapist and local youth workers are examples of partners who contribute to young people's learning experiences. These strong partnerships ensure young people are supported to make well-informed decisions about health and wellbeing.

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

Staff have made a good start to improving literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing within the context of *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are working with parents and young people to review the school's aims and values. Working in teams, staff are increasingly involved in decisions about school improvement. Most departments gather young people's views about courses. Staff need to take more account of what young people say when seeking to improve learning. The pupil council is taking the lead in working to become a "Rights Respecting School". Using a range of effective approaches, senior staff have involved all staff in identifying the school's strengths and development priorities. Agreed policies on learning and teaching and behaviour are not consistently applied by all staff. Many staff share good practice both formally and informally but more need to do so. Current approaches to monitoring and tracking young people's progress are not effective. The school has taken some steps towards improving this.

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

Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding young people. The majority of young people feel that staff deal with their bullying concerns effectively. The school continues to address this issue as part of personal and social education. Staff should continue to raise young people's aspirations by setting consistently high standards for classroom learning and homework. Some staff need to

raise their expectations of what young people can do and achieve. The school has achieved an Eco-Schools Scotland silver award and a Health Promoting Schools silver award. With support from local chaplains, the school is using religious observance to celebrate and reflect on shared values and personal beliefs. Young people are increasing their understanding of issues relating to race, gender, social inequalities and global citizenship.

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

The headteacher has set a positive tone for the life and work of the school. Working with the deputy headteachers, he has significantly improved school relationships and established effective teamwork across staff. Staff, young people, parents and partners value his leadership. He now needs to share his strategic vision for improving the school more widely. He needs to ensure a continued shared focus on attainment and achievement and a positive, inclusive experience for all young people. Deputy headteachers need to develop consistently stronger links with principal teachers to develop a shared approach to leadership for learning. Young people would like more responsibility for school improvement. From S1, many are capable of achieving this. Across the school, there are clear indications that the school is improving and a growing sense of pride within the school community. With further involvement of parents, partners and young people, the school has the capacity to continue moving forward positively.

8. What happens next?

We are confident that, with support from the education authority, the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education. Our District Inspector will maintain contact with the education authority to monitor improvements in learners' achievement.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Raise attainment and achievement.
- Ensure self-evaluation leads to consistently high-quality learning and teaching, building on young people's prior experiences.
- Further extend the curriculum to ensure appropriate progression and skills development for all young people.

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 HMIE 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 Baldragon Academy.

Improvements in performance	satisfactory
Learners' experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Patricia Watson
1 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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