



**Ballikinrain School
Balfron
Stirling
20 May 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school. We describe how young people¹ benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the school does this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents² and services which support children and young people. We also comment on how well staff, children and young people work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the 'ethos' of the school. By 'ethos' we mean the relationships in the school, how well young people are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally, we comment on the school's aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the school's success in achieving these aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

¹ Throughout this report, we will use the term 'young people' across all stages.

² Throughout this report, the '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

Ballikinrain is an independent, non-denominational residential school situated near Balfron in Stirling Council area. The school is run by Crossreach social care agency which is part of the Church of Scotland. It provides education for young people aged 8 years to 14 years experiencing significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Care is provided on a 52 week basis if required. At the time of the inspection the school roll was 35 including ten young people attending on a daily basis and 25 on a residential placement. The attendance of most day boys was good. However, the attendance of a few was poor.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- High quality social and emotional support for young people.
- The wide range of learning experiences within the 24 hour curriculum.
- Young people's improved self-esteem through working with staff who treat them with equality, fairness and respect.
- Flexible approaches to meeting individual needs and encouraging young people's interests.
- Partnership working between care, education and other agencies to support young people and their families.
- Shared vision and leadership across the school.

3. Examples of good practice

- Learning communities – care and education working together for young people.
- Motivating learners through the 'Forest Schools' initiative.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Most young people are motivated and participate well in activities. Staff in the units and in school adapt learning activities to take very good account of learners' interests and strengths. Young people choose from a wide range of afternoon activities including enterprise, art, sport, drama, horse riding, music and craft and design. These experiences are helping them to be active in their learning, work in teams and improve their health and fitness. Young people and staff make good use of digital cameras to record their learning experiences and celebrate their successes at daily assemblies. They feel safe, included and respected. They enjoy the range of leisure activities on offer within the 24 hour curriculum. Young people feel well supported in their learning and think staff encourage them to behave well.

Young people are developing their confidence through reading at assemblies and making presentations on a number of topics including conserving the local environment. They regularly express their views in school through the School Council, completing questionnaires on their learning in classes and through discussion groups. A few young people are developing their awareness of the world of work, for example, by working as a chef or in the local stables. Young people are also developing their confidence and skills through taking part in a wide range of activities in the evenings and weekends run by care staff. Opportunities have included camping trips in Aviemore and visits to the south of France. Staff carefully monitor their progress and celebrate their successes. Young people take great pride in the attractive displays in the units, receiving individual certificates and personal recognition at assemblies. A number of young people have gained Shine Awards for achievements in athletics

The school has recently become the first residential school in Scotland to gain a Green Flag for Eco Schools activities. Young people are making good progress towards targets based on the 5-14 curriculum, National Qualifications framework and the Award Scheme and

Accreditation Network (ASDAN). In the primary class young people communicated their views well and were encouraged to think independently whilst improving a piece of writing. Through regular contact with their teacher, they were very aware of their individual behaviour targets and what to do to improve. In the secondary classes, most young people remained on task while completing short activities. These activities took good account of their levels of concentration. They were able to listen for information and work individually on writing and spelling tasks. Most were showing good progress in number work and aspects of using money. A few showed good skills in mental maths work. However, targets related to developing young people's literacy and numeracy do not take full account of their progress within afternoon activities or help them to make the most of opportunities to develop these skills across the 24 hour curriculum. The school does not yet fully recognise young people's achievements in some afternoon activities through certification.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Overall the school provides a broad curriculum for young people which takes account of individual needs and interests. The school bases learning activities on the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Staff give due regard to improving the health and wellbeing of young people in a clear and consistent way through effective joint working between education and care staff. For example, there is a strong emphasis on reading and storytelling within units to support literacy. Experiences of community life within the school and local area develop young people's sense of responsibility. Staff across the school provide a wide choice of activities for young people two afternoons each week. This includes an emphasis on outdoor learning through the 'Forest School' initiative which involves young people in increasing their awareness of the natural environment as well as building independence and team working skills. The health and wellbeing programme is adapted regularly to ensure it is relevant to individual young people. The school has not yet developed a core health and wellbeing programme to enable young people to improve

their fitness. Young people do not receive two hours of quality physical education each week. The school is developing programmes to prepare young people for the world of work.

Activities and resources within classes successfully meet the learning needs of most young people and allow them to make good progress. However a few young people would benefit from more challenging learning activities, particularly when they are working in the classroom. Young people are regularly praised for good behaviour. However, the behaviour of a few young people can disrupt learning at times. On occasion, some young people don't recognise the consequences of their actions in a way which will help them to manage their own behaviour independently. Staff manage individual care plans and risk assessments well. Young people have a key team (teacher and care worker) who help to support them across all aspects of school life. The key teacher sets and monitors targets set within individualised educational programmes (IEPs) and works effectively with parents and a range of partners. The quality of IEP targets is not always consistent. The support for learning teacher carries out very helpful assessments which provide teachers with useful information about young people's progress in numeracy and literacy. He provides them with helpful approaches to meet individual needs in classes.

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

Family support workers ensure that parents and carers are fully involved in planning and reviewing young people's progress. They also provide family support which is highly valued by parents. Care and education staff ensure young people receive high quality support when settling in to Ballikinrain School or when moving on to other destinations. Social inclusion workers support young people to successfully return to mainstream schools within their local communities. Staff within the school's Learning Communities regularly communicate with parents and partners and involve them in planning and reviewing progress. The school maintains effective links with

educational psychologists and social workers to provide specialist support for young people and families and regular staff training. Befrienders from the local community effectively support a few young people by involving them in the community and building positive relationships with them. The local community group 'The Friends of Ballikinrain' actively support and promote the school in the local community through fundraising and planned visits to informally inspect the school. Partners and other agencies are positive about their involvement with the school. The school has appropriate approaches for addressing any complaints.

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

Young people contribute to making decisions about the school environment and learning through the School Council and by discussing their targets set within IEPs. They have regular opportunities to express their views at assemblies. Parents have some opportunities to give their views about the work of the school through questionnaires and informal contacts. Staff use the Learning Community groups to meet every day to share their views and experiences and work together to find solutions to problems. They have a strong commitment to school improvement and making a difference to young people. Managers have clear methods of regularly monitoring learning and teaching through observing lessons and involving all staff effectively in school improvement planning. However, there is not always a sharp enough focus on taking action to bring about improvement once areas to develop have been identified. There is a need to identify a smaller number of important targets to address on a more regular basis. Arrangements for supervision of staff do not yet enable them to link their own training and development needs directly to school improvement.

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

The school provides a very nurturing environment which helps young people feel they belong and can achieve success. Throughout the school and in the units young people and staff have very positive relationships and demonstrate trust and mutual respect. Through extensive staff training and effective liaison all staff have realistic expectations of young people's behaviour and personal achievements. However, expectations for their learning achievements are not always high enough. The school has very good arrangements for young people's care and welfare. A significant minority of young people are concerned about bullying. Staff are aware of and take effective action to address bullying. Young people eat a well-balanced diet and take part in a number of activities to keep fit including football, jogging and physical education. The school recognises the need to ensure that staff in the units can access additional support when required in the interests of safety. Appropriate arrangements are in place for religious observance.

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

Leadership across the school is strong. The Service Manager effectively promotes the school's reputation in the community. Heads of Education and Care work effectively as a team with the Service Manager and lead staff very well. They successfully support team working, involving care and education staff in sharing ideas and improving the learning and wellbeing of young people. All middle managers take responsibility for managing the school on a rota basis as well as taking forward aspects of school improvement. Effective arrangements are in place for staff supervision. The school shows a high level commitment to training to increase the competence of staff in providing quality support to young people. All staff promote the school's shared vision and values and take responsibility for leading aspects of learning and support. The school now needs to use self-evaluation to focus more on the impact on young people of the work it is doing. This includes demonstrating how improvements made link to positive outcomes for young people.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that with the support of the Crossreach Management Team, the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in the light of inspection findings. As a result we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and Council of Management.

- Continue to develop the curriculum in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Continue to develop opportunities to improve attainment and achievement.
- Improve support plans to ensure young people's targets are clear and consistent.

Care Commission issues from previous singleton inspection

- The school must provide evidence within three months of this report that there has been improvements in the handling of repairs and redecoration in the bedroom areas.

This is in order to comply with: SSI 2002/114 Regulation 4(1)(a) - a requirement to make proper provision for health and welfare of service users

- The service should continue to review its security policy, and report the outcome of this to the Care Commission local office. This must be done within three months of the receipt of this report, and should address the issue of how to ensure smooth movement of

people across the campus, with overall safety from potential intruders into the living or classroom space.

This is in order to comply with: SSI 2002/114 Regulation 4(1)(a) - a requirement to make proper provision for health and welfare of service users

- The service must introduce its appraisal system for all staff within six months of receiving the finalised inspection report.

This is in order to comply with: SSI 2002/114 Regulation 13(c)(i) - a requirement to ensure that staff have appropriate training for the work they are to perform.

And:

- It is recommended that individualised user friendly versions of care plans and other documents should continue to be encouraged through key worker/young people discussion. A visual and graphic layout, as provided in some instances, should be more usable by the young people themselves.

This is to comply with the National Care Standards, School Care Accommodation Services - 3.1, Care and Protection, and 10.3 Contributing to your Care

- The school should look to reducing the amount of documentation used in care planning and case recording: this may be assisted by more use of the on-line system, and keeping a young persons paper records only in the unit where that young person resides.

This is to comply with the National Care Standards, School Care Accommodation Services - 7.4, Management and Staffing.

These were put forward at the last Care Commission inspection on 9 June 2008, and have not been implemented. Since they include

requirements, this will affect the future Care Commission grading of the service.

Requirements

There were no new requirements from this inspection. The requirements above are still outstanding.

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 Ballikinrain School

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

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

June Orr
HM Inspector

Tony Clarke
Care Commission

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This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

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

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