



**Charleston Academy
Inverness
The Highland Council
15 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

Charleston Academy is a non-denominational school which serves the west of Inverness. The roll was 809 when the inspection was carried out in April 2010. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Responsible young people who treat others with respect.
- Very positive relationships and an inclusive ethos.
- Partnership working with parents and partner agencies to support learning.
- Staff's teamwork and engagement in professional development.
- The clear vision and direction provided by the headteacher.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Young people are very well motivated, enthusiastic learners who enjoy school. They work successfully with each other and with their teachers in an environment of mutual respect and shared responsibility. Staff provide high levels of care for young people. Young people often take responsibility for their learning, including working in groups to investigate issues relevant to their community. In most lessons, young people engage in high quality discussion and creative thinking. They use information and communications technology (ICT) confidently for research and to present their work. Young people have further increased their ICT skills by producing DVDs which share their learning with others. Across the school, young people receive helpful feedback on their learning through a range of methods. This practice is not consistent enough to ensure young people are always involved in identifying their strengths and next steps in learning.

Many young people extend their skills through interesting and challenging activities both in and beyond the classroom. Young people are developing well as global citizens with an awareness of equality and diversity, poverty and human rights. They demonstrate a growing awareness of the need to support others in the local and global community. Successful fundraising and learning projects with schools in Botswana, South Africa and Sri Lanka deepen their understanding of global citizenship. Many young people develop important skills for work through young enterprise projects, organising school shows and running the school radio station. Their work contributes a great deal to the positive ethos of the school. Young people increase their confidence through participation in performances at The Eden Court Theatre. Senior young people exercise leadership and take responsibility through supporting younger learners across the school. Young people regularly achieve high levels of success and accreditation for their achievements in particular in hospitality, sports and the expressive arts.

By the end of S2, most young people achieve national levels in reading. Around half achieve these levels in writing. The majority achieve them in mathematics. By the end of S4, young people's achievements at General and Credit levels of Standard Grade or equivalent have steadily improved over recent years. Attainment at this stage has remained consistently high. At S5, the number of young people achieving three or more Higher awards has increased. More young people could achieve five or more Higher awards at S5. The school should continue to work with parents and young people to ensure young people make well informed course choices. By the end of S6, the school's results at Higher level are better than in schools where young people have similar needs and backgrounds. The school needs to improve arrangements for tracking and monitoring young people's progress to maximise achievement at all stages. Young people with additional support needs achieve very well in a range of appropriate awards. The number of young people going from school into higher or further education or training has increased recently.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Working with parents and a range of partners, the school has taken good account of *Curriculum for Excellence* in revising and developing the curriculum. A positive start has been made to improving young people's understanding of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across a range of curricular areas. A few departments have introduced initiatives that are improving continuity and progression in young people's learning from P7 to S1. There is scope to extend this practice across the school. At S3/S4 a significant number of young people follow high quality courses in rural skills and hospitality. Plans for more skills for work courses, for example through links with the local Citizens Advice Bureau, are developing well. At all stages, the school has extended the range of opportunities for qualifications and achievement very well. These include the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), John Muir and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Advanced Higher and Open University courses for young people in S6. All young people benefit from the school's commitment to learning beyond the classroom. These include challenging international excursions, trips to local and national places of interest and opportunities for voluntary work. The school should increase provision for physical education and religious and moral education at S5/S6 in line with national expectations.

Staff are sensitive to the needs of young people. They support young people in developing positive relationships with others. This strengthens young people's emotional wellbeing. Staff in subject departments take increasing responsibility for supporting learning. Most teachers plan learning which motivates and engages learners. They need to ensure tasks and activities are appropriate to meet the varying needs and abilities of all young people. Guidance and support for learning teams support young people very well. A significant number of staff across the school have received training as mentors. They give additional support and guidance to young people. Personal Learning Plans and specialist *Child's Plans* include suitable learning targets for young people with additional support needs. Young people

and parents are appropriately involved in developing and reviewing these plans.

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

Parents are very positive about the school. The majority feel the school takes good account of their views. Any complaints raised with the school are resolved quickly and sensitively. A few parents have visited classrooms to share their expertise with young people, for example, as visiting artists. The school works effectively with a wide range of partner agencies to support young people's learning. These include the Integrated Services Officer, the Children's Services Worker and the Educational Psychologist. Positive working relationships with *The Abriachan Forest Trust* and both local and internationally renowned chefs have led to significant benefits in learning in hospitality, modern languages and rural skills. The school has very good links with *The Highland Football Academy Trust* which gives young people access to high quality sporting facilities. Guidance and support for learning staff work effectively with others to ensure young people are well supported during the transition from P7 to S1.

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

Staff and young people work very well together to improve their school. Staff, parents and young people recently reviewed and revised the school values and aims. Young people and staff promote these values effectively throughout the school. Young people who have completed the *Columba 1400* leadership programme play an important role in the school. An S3 group led an initiative which encouraged S1 young people to be more involved in school life. Young people are increasingly engaged in evaluating teaching and learning. Staff value their opinions. Committees on Fair Trade, Eco-schools, health promotion and the pupil council involve many other young people in contributing to school improvement. The school should continue working to improve communication about the work of

these committees to ensure all young people feel included. All staff participate in an extensive range of continuing professional development which they use to improve their work. Their high level of commitment and professional reflection is resulting in learning which is more active and enjoyable for young people.

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

Young people respond very well to staff's high expectations for behaviour and commitment to learning. Young people are very well informed about how to live healthier and safer lives. Through their relationships with each other and with young people, staff act as positive role models. They demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning which young people appreciate. Appropriate arrangements for religious observance enable young people to engage in regular reflection on their beliefs and values. Young people's understanding of equality and diversity is well developed through learning across the curriculum and through school assemblies.

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

Charleston Academy is very well led. The effective leadership of the headteacher sets a positive example for staff and young people. They value his commitment and trust his judgement. Staff and young people feel valued and supported in their efforts to maximise their potential. Senior managers carry out their remits well as individuals and as a team. The widely shared vision, values and aims clearly underpin the work and life of the school community. There is a strong sense of shared responsibility. With an increased emphasis on raising attainment and achievement for all young people, the school is well placed to continue moving from strength to strength.

8. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The education authority will inform parents about the school's progress

as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its schools.

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

- Improve approaches to tracking and monitoring with the aim of further raising attainment and achievement.
- Ensure learning experiences consistently provide appropriate levels of support and challenge to meet young people's varying needs and abilities.

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 Charleston Academy.

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

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Patricia Watson

15 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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