



**Grangemouth High School
Falkirk Council
9 March 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

Grangemouth High School is a non-denominational school which serves the town of Grangemouth within Falkirk Council. The roll was 820 when the inspection was carried out in January 2010. Young people's attendance had improved from in line with to above national averages in 2008/09. A Falkirk Council Additional Support Centre (ASC) is an integral part of the school and supports young people with social communication difficulties.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Friendly, courteous, motivated young people who are actively involved in the school and community.
- Leadership of young people in promoting the health and wellbeing of their peers and the wider community.
- Partnerships with external agencies to enrich and support young people's learning and wider achievement.
- The high number of teachers working together to improve learning and teaching.
- The leadership of the headteacher in improving the school.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Almost all young people are well motivated, attentive and keen to learn. Most enjoy their learning and feel safe and cared for in school. Young people work confidently on individual and group tasks which engage them in creative thinking and discussion. They are increasingly actively involved in their learning and taking responsibility for their learning. Such approaches need to be further developed across the school. Teachers set learning targets and increasingly provide helpful feedback to young people on their strengths as learners. Young people are benefitting from evaluating their own work and determining what they need to do to improve. This practice is not yet consistent across all lessons. Young people in the ASC work effectively with others and are motivated by their activities in the centre and subject lessons.

Young people successfully develop informed attitudes, strong leadership and teamwork skills through a wide range of activities in the school and community. Many gain leadership awards through organising and running clubs for their peers. These include dance, drama, science and various sporting activities. Other young people contribute very well through voluntary and community activities locally, nationally and internationally. Many confidently perform and display their musical and artistic talents in school shows and in the wider community. Young people show good skills in enterprise by organising events such as house challenges and the Burns Supper celebration. At S5/S6, several young people successfully achieve Young Enterprise Scotland and Young International Trader awards. The school was awarded a third Gold Celebrating Success Award by Falkirk Council in recognition of their enterprise and business engagement activities. The school is examining ways to evaluate the impact of these experiences on young people's self esteem and broader skills for life, including those at risk of missing out.

At S1/S2, the majority of young people achieve an appropriate national level in mathematics and build well on their prior learning. The majority are making progress from prior levels of attainment in reading and writing. Young people have an attainment target in all other curriculum areas in S1/S2. The school is not effectively checking young people's progress towards meeting these targets. At S4, attainment in national examinations varies from well below to well above national averages. Those participating in skills for work and employability courses, including Award Scheme and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards, achieve success. At S6, the number of young people attaining three or five Higher awards has improved. At this stage the school performs in line with and better than schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. Young people at risk of missing out and those with additional support needs are making appropriate progress. Those in the ASC are making good progress. Most young people leave school for further study or employment.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Young people study a broad range of subjects from S1 to S6. Staff regularly review the curriculum to broaden learning experiences and increase choices for young people. At S3/S4, these include a range of skills for life and work options including ASDAN, The John Muir and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award schemes. In S5/S6, courses allow for progression and further choice. Almost all young people benefit from two hours of high-quality physical education each week. A few subject departments are building well on young people's learning in primary school but this is not consistent across the school. An outdoor education programme provides learners in the ASC with valuable opportunities to learn in different situations and to improve their social communication skills. Course programmes are appropriately adapted to meet the needs of young people in the ASC. The school has made an effective start to developing the curriculum in line with the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Approaches to encouraging literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across learning are developing well. Teachers are working well together to help young people link their learning across different subjects.

Young people's learning needs are met well overall. Staff know young people well and are aware of their learning needs. Teachers explain work well. Increasingly, they make good use of questions to help young people think about their learning. Tasks and activities are set at the right level for most young people. Teachers and specialist staff should make more use of consultation time to jointly plan and develop activities at the right level for all learners. Increasingly, staff make effective use of information and communications technology to support learning. Staff plan and adapt tasks well to meet the needs of young people in the ASC. Staff in the ASC, support assistants and pupil support staff effectively help young people learn in class. Learning targets in individualised educational programmes are not always focused well enough on the specific needs of the young person.

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

Strong and successful partnerships with local businesses, Forth Valley College, local community groups and health agencies are improving young people's achievement and citizenship skills. The school has strong pastoral links with their associated primaries. Young people benefit from the school's effective planning and communication with a range of partners to support their personal and social development. For example, a weekly lunchtime drop-in session provides young people with easy access to a range of services including health, police, and the Samaritans. Young people in S5/S6 are trained by a local community 'Straight Talk' project to provide valuable information to their peers on issues such as drug and alcohol abuse. The school librarian supports subject staff well to help young people develop their research and literacy skills. The Parent Council supports the school well and is helping the school to find new ways of involving parents more in their child's learning. The school deals promptly and effectively with any concerns or complaints.

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

Many young people work well with staff, parents and members of the community to help improve the school. For example, the Female Health Council has influenced the school's approaches to health promotion. The school and house councils are becoming more involved in sharing their views on aspects of the school's work. However, less than half of young people think that the councils are effective at improving the school. They would like more say in improving their school, particularly how they learn. Staff work hard to develop their professional skills and to improve learning and teaching. Many provide supported study sessions, offer clubs and lead whole-school working groups. The school is improving its approaches to self-evaluation. These include visiting classes to observe learning, sharing the good practice that exists within the school and analysing attainment information. Overall, these approaches are not yet

consistently leading to improvements across the school. Senior managers now need to work closely with faculty heads and staff to develop a more consistent and systematic approach to self-evaluation to achieve improvement across all subjects.

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

The school has a very positive ethos. Young people enjoy friendly, mutually-respectful relationships with staff. They learn about equality and respect through the curriculum including sessions on 'Valuing Difference'. Staff set high expectations of young people's behaviour and attendance. Most young people feel that their teachers encourage them to work to the best of their ability. A few teachers do not set high enough expectations of what young people can achieve. The school has appropriate systems to ensure the care and protection of its young people. Young people's achievements are widely shared and celebrated through house assemblies, newsletters and the school website. Young people have suitable opportunities for religious observance. The school very effectively supports and encourages young people to make healthy lifestyle choices.

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

The headteacher provides strong and visionary leadership. She knows the school well and has correctly identified the main priorities for improvement. The depute headteachers are committed to the school and work well as a team. They now need to provide a stronger lead in supporting faculty heads to develop their leadership role to bring about change and improvement within their faculties. Many staff willingly take on roles of responsibility within the school. Others are leading important developments at local and national level. As a result staff are developing a shared understanding of effective learning and teaching and raising attainment. Young people effectively take on a range of leadership roles including Sports Ambassadors, peer educators and mentors. The school has a strong capacity to improve itself further.

8. What happens next?

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

- Develop more consistent and rigorous arrangements for self-evaluation to increase the impact on the quality of education.
- Continue to build on and share existing good practice to improve learning and teaching.

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 Grangemouth High School.

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

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

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Fiona Robertson

9 March 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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