



**Holyrood Secondary  
School  
Glasgow City Council  
16 March 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents<sup>1</sup>, 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](http://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, you will also be able to find a report on the learning community surrounding the school.

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<sup>1</sup> 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**

Holyrood Secondary School is a denominational school which serves a large area of the south side of Glasgow. The roll was 1950 when the inspection was carried out in January 2010. Young people's attendance had improved to above the national average in 2007/08. The proportion of young people entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. English was an additional language for around a fifth of young people on the school roll.

## **2. Particular strengths of the school**

- Courteous, self-motivated and respectful young people who take pride in their school.
- Staff leading improvements in learning and their provision of out-of-class activities.
- Young people's wider achievements and high levels of attainment.
- Links with partners and community groups supporting young people's learning and their move on from secondary school.
- The strong community of faith and Christian values which underpin the school's work.
- The strong lead given by the headteacher in establishing and delivering a clear vision for school improvement.

## **3. How well do young people learn and achieve?**

### **Learning and achievement**

Almost all young people are motivated, have positive attitudes and engage well in their learning. They behave well and work successfully together and with their teachers in a purposeful learning environment, characterised by mutual respect. Recent developments in learning and teaching are having a positive impact on learners' experiences in most departments. Across a range of subjects, young people are beginning to take more responsibility for their own learning. In most lessons, young people are clear about the aims of their learning activities. They receive constructive feedback on how to improve their learning and are beginning to develop a clear idea of their strengths and areas for improvement. Almost all young people feel they are safe and well cared for and most feel they are treated fairly. They appreciate the efforts which many staff make to 'go the extra mile'.

Young people, particularly those at the senior stages, have a strong sense of responsibility. They contribute well to developing the school's sense of community. Many steps have been taken to survey pupils' views about learning in most departments. A minority of young people however are not clear how their views of learning and school life are acted upon.

The school provides extensive opportunities for young people to achieve widely. Over 300 young people in S1 to S3 have developed their leadership skills through the outward bound challenge weeks. In S1 to S3 the Holyrood Challenge recognises and rewards young people's attendance and effort through the awarding of reward points, and praise cards and through an annual awards ceremony. Young people in all year groups can extend their knowledge of other cultures through overseas trips. The school has links with several schools in various European countries, providing an effective forum for young people to share their experiences. The eco group achieved an Eco-School's Scotland gold award for sustainable development education. The school was awarded the Buchanan's of Scotland Young People of the year award for its work in Malawi. Those in S6 are becoming more responsible through the Mark Scott leadership programme. The school supports a range of charitable causes annually, enhancing young people's awareness and understanding of the needs of others. Young people achieve well in sports, art, music and creative activities and many are successful at school, council and national level. Together with the annual school show these prove to be popular choices for young people in developing their skills and confidence in performing and presenting. While young people's skills for work are being effectively and progressively developed, a small number do not yet have the opportunity to apply these skills in a workplace setting.

By the end of S2, the majority of young people attain appropriate national levels of achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Young people in S1/S2 are progressing well in their learning and the school recognises the need to systematically track their progress at these stages. There are aspects of young people's achievement

which are excellent. Overall levels of attainment from S3 to S6 are consistently better or much better than schools serving young people with similar needs and from similar backgrounds. In almost all measures the school consistently performs in line with or above national averages. There are clear improving trends in attainment in the majority of key measures. By the end of S6 figures have improved year on year over the last four years and the school performs consistently above the national average. Across all stages, the attainment levels of the most vulnerable young people have been raised.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

At S1/S2, the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Young people at S1/S2 are effectively introduced to subject disciplines through programme rotations in social subjects, technologies and science. At S3/S4, young people can study a range of courses at a variety of levels. An increasing number of partnerships with colleges have extended the range of courses from S3 to S6 to include childcare, engineering and Baccalaureates in science and language. The Malawi project enriches the curriculum and is effectively promoting global citizenship. Young people are developing their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and being helped to have informed, ethical views. Teachers are encouraged to introduce well-planned innovations in line with the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are increasingly working across disciplines to make learning more meaningful for young people. S5/S6 courses allow for progression and young people can broaden their learning through other options including politics. Young people in S1 to S4 benefit from two hours of good quality physical education each week in line with national expectations. This is not the case for those in S5/S6. Pastoral links with associated primary schools are strong. Curricular links to improve continuity and progress in young people's learning from P7 to S1 are being further developed. The school recognises the need to review the personal and social education programme to ensure all young people are fully prepared for their future careers and life beyond school.

Almost all staff know young people well as learners and are aware of their additional support needs. Specialist staff identify young people's learning needs effectively and share this information with all staff. Young people with additional support needs are fully included in class and school activities. The school's 'learning unit' provides effective help. Staff work closely with parents and young people to achieve and review targets set within pupils' support plans. Young people with English as an additional language are very well supported. A few staff need to make adjustments to class tasks and activities more consistently to ensure that the needs of all young people are met effectively. In English and mathematics a few young people are following courses that are insufficiently challenging. The Browsers project in modern languages and support tutorials use information and communications technology very effectively to support young people's learning needs. The 'Bridging the Gap' project helps vulnerable young people to make a positive move to secondary school.

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

The school works in productive partnership with a broad range of agencies. The Youth Employability Group works very effectively with the employability officer to support school leavers. It helps them to make sound choices and enter jobs or further training or education when they leave. Consultation with parents is effective and improving. The Parent Council is involved in improvement planning and all parents receive a copy of the plan. Parenting workshops are offered by the health service and are well received by parents. The Joint Support Team successfully targets both parents and grandparents to attend meetings. Castlemilk Stress Management develops young people's ability to better deal with their levels of anxiety. The Youth Counselling Service Agency supports young people experiencing difficulties, helping them to manage their emotions more effectively. The school responds effectively to complaints.

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

All staff are involved in reviewing aspects of their own work and that of their departments. They track young people's progress systematically from S3 to S6 and highlight appropriate ways of supporting their achievements. Staff identify strengths and areas for action following analysis of young people's attainment. They agree strategies for improvement and include these in improvement plans. Learning and teaching is being improved by having a sustained whole-school focus on features of effective learning and teaching. The whole-school planning process has led to a number of improvements including higher levels of achievement, attendance and more positive leaver destinations. The number of young people excluded from school has declined to below the national average. In a small number of classes young people's experiences have not improved significantly. The school recognises the need to gather the views of parents and young people more systematically. Staff want to further improve the impact of peer class visits and the sharing of good practice.

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

The school has very high expectations of young people's behaviour and attendance. Most staff have appropriately high expectations of young people's capacity to achieve. Regular assemblies, plasma screens and daily announcements promote young people's successes and encourage others to achieve. The school places a strong emphasis on developing a community of faith and provides very good opportunities for worship. Young people's personal and spiritual development is encouraged through the school's vision and values. They respect different cultures and have informed views of equality and fairness. They speak positively about their learning in health and of making appropriate decisions in relation to their own wellbeing.

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

Young people are well-engaged in leadership activities such as the Inclusion and Diversity groups, peer mentoring, the pastoral team and paired reading. Staff, including chartered teachers, lead on a large number of whole-school development groups. They are very positive about their involvement in school decision making and its in-house professional development. They have been very well consulted over the school's vision and values. The team of depute headteachers provide effective support to the headteacher and staff. They work well together, taking forward the school's plans for improvement. The headteacher has driven forward the school's work with energy and enthusiasm while seeking the highest possible standards. He possesses a clear vision for the future and has inspired staff to successfully lead aspects of the school's development. He has brought about a greater degree of self-reflection among teaching staff, ensuring that the quality of learning and teaching remains a central focus in the school's ongoing work. Holyrood Secondary School is a successful school with a well-developed capacity to improve further.

## **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 school.

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

- Continue to improve the quality of learning consistently across the school.

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 Holyrood Secondary School.

|                                    |                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Improvements in performance</b> | <b>very good</b> |
| <b>Learners' experiences</b>       | <b>good</b>      |
| <b>Meeting learning needs</b>      | <b>very good</b> |

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

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <b>The curriculum</b>                      | <b>very good</b> |
| <b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b> | <b>very good</b> |

**HM Inspector:** Donald Macleod  
16 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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