



**Notre Dame High School  
Dowanhill  
Glasgow City Council  
22 December 2009**

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 descriptions of good practice in the school and 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**

Notre Dame High School is a denominational school for girls which serves the north-west of Glasgow. The roll was 788 when the inspection was carried out in November 2009. Around three quarters of the girls attend as a result of placing requests. Around a third of young people have English as an additional language. Young people's attendance was above the national average in 2007/2008 and continues to improve. Almost a third of young people attending are from areas of multiple deprivation.

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

- Outstanding ethos which nurtures and develops very well behaved, courteous and confident young people.
- Young people's wide range of achievements.
- A Catholic community of faith which embraces and celebrates the rich diversity of cultures and faiths in the school.
- The wide range of partners and opportunities for learning which enhance young people's experiences.
- Staff's developing approaches to implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Visionary leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team.

## **3. Examples of good practice**

- Developing the four capacities of a *Curriculum for Excellence* through "The Creative Curriculum".
- Wider Achievement - A school approach to "Values in Action".
- Supporting young people at risk of missing out in their transition to long-term training or employment.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

Young people are very enthusiastic about their learning. They enjoy school and want to do well. They feel nurtured, safe and very well cared for by staff. They like the ways in which the school develops

their health and wellbeing. Young people use information and communications technology (ICT) often and well. They use the Internet for research and to help them prepare presentations. This helps them to learn better on their own. They contribute very well to class discussions and are very good at debating. At times, young people use “pupil logs” very effectively to identify their strengths and needs as learners. This practice should be developed further across the school.

Young people enjoy success in a very wide range of activities including debating, sports, school shows, scientific and engineering challenges. They contribute very well through voluntary and community activities locally, nationally and internationally. For example, through a senior citizens party, a “Hint of Pink” fundraising event for breast cancer, volunteer work in the developing world and with the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes. Young people’s enjoyment of personal reading has been enhanced by meeting well known authors and poets. A few young people make superbly creative cakes.

The school is improving young people’s attainment and their life chances. Most young people achieve appropriate levels in mathematics and the majority of young people achieve appropriate levels in reading and writing. The proportion of young people achieving these levels is increasing. For many young people this is significant progress. The school needs to know more clearly how young people are progressing in other areas of the curriculum. By the end of S4, results in examinations are generally above national averages. By the end of S6, results are also generally above national averages. At all stages and all levels, the proportion of young people gaining awards is much better than in other schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. Young people with a range of additional support needs make very good progress. The school has improved the proportion of young people leaving for further education, training or employment. Commendably, around a half of young people now progress to higher education and a further quarter progress to further education.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

The curriculum, which is reviewed each year, reflects the rich and diverse range of faiths and cultures within the school. The school has made an effective start to reviewing the development of skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across learning. S1 courses in mathematics build well on young people's learning at primary school. Staff have developed courses such as the "S1/S2 Creative Curriculum" to meet the needs of young people better. This supports the effective development of young people's skills in English, technology, enterprise, creativity and develops life-long skills such as first aid. Young people enjoy the choice of activities offered, in partnership with the Prince's Trust, through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). In S5 young people can gain important skills for life and work through courses in child care and financial education. An S6 optional programme "Values in Action" develops personal responsibility, perseverance and physical fitness. All S6 young people are offered opportunities at lunchtime and after school to ensure they also develop these skills. The school has recently established a partnership with the Open University to deepen young people's learning in areas such as cardiovascular medicine. The school should carefully review the programme for personal and social education at S5/S6 and the time young people are benefitting from physical education.

Young people like the wide range of highly-effective support available to them. They work well together and support each other to achieve. The school clearly identifies young people's learning needs and shares this information with all staff. Young people who are at risk of leaving school without a positive destination are identified in S1 and highly-effective supports are put in place at a very early stage. Staff know the young people very well. Young people with additional support needs, their parents and staff work together to set targets within additional support plans. Young people are making very good progress towards these targets. Young people with English as an additional language (EAL) are making very effective progress.

Across the school, teachers should adapt more resources and materials to better suit the needs of all learners.

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

Many parents choose the school for their daughter's education. Overall they are pleased with it. They think that reports on progress reflect the young person well. Parents' evenings are well supported by translators provided by the education authority. The school communicates with parents in a range of different languages and there is scope to increase this further. The Parent Council is well consulted on a range of issues and school improvements. The Archdiocese and the Sisters of Notre Dame provide very effective chaplaincy support and are well represented on the group which is seeking to further develop the religious and moral ethos of the school. The school works very well with a wide range of partners to enhance learning, for example Cardonald and Langside colleges. It has established very effective partnerships, including with the Prince's Trust, staff from Culture and Sport Glasgow and the Youth Community Support Agency, which are making a significant difference to young people.

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

S6 support younger people by organising clubs, working with them in classes, helping at lunchtime homework clubs and leading activities. For example, they are leading others as the school works towards an Eco-Schools Scotland green flag award. The headteacher is involving young people, staff and parents very effectively in developing a new vision, values and aims for the school. Staff at all levels are well represented on the school improvement team. The school improvement plan is reviewed regularly throughout the year and revised as appropriate to ensure an impact on learners. The senior leadership team carefully consider information about attainment and targets areas for improvement. Most teachers think about their own practices and try to make them better. Staff are beginning to ask for

young people's views about their learning and make changes as a result. The school continues to focus on improving learning in classes. Commendably, the school recognises the scope to develop this and further improve the consistency of experience for learners.

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

The school ethos is outstanding. Staff give a very high priority to the nurture, inclusion, health and wellbeing of all. Staff are aware of procedures relating to keeping young people safe. Young people are happy, very well behaved individuals who are delighted to acknowledge the successes and achievements of others. They are incredibly proud of their school. The school celebrates achievements through letters to parents, assemblies, award ceremonies, and high-quality photographic displays of learners' experiences. The school has a very strong Catholic community of faith. Assemblies provide regular opportunities for religious worship and sharing values. There is a very rich religious and cultural diversity. Young people enjoy celebrating other important festivals such as Ramadan and Diwali. The school handles the very few complaints that it gets well.

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

The headteacher sets a very clear direction. She shares her own vision and values for the school very well. She provides very strong leadership. She is very ably supported by her senior leadership team. She knows the key strengths and qualities of her team and blends these skills together very effectively. Depute headteachers are responsible for many exciting and innovative developments, for example improvements to the curriculum and professional development for all staff. Staff at all levels lead developments in a number of areas including literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing.

## **9. What happens next?**

The inspection team was able to rely on the school's self-evaluation to make its evaluations and the school agreed with these evaluations at

an early stage of the inspection. As a result, the inspection team was able to change its focus during the inspection to help the school plan to improve even more.

The school provides a very good quality of education. Therefore, 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 area for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Further improve the consistency and quality of learners' experiences through more focused self-evaluation.

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 Notre Dame High School.

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>excellent</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>very 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:** Elizabeth Morrison  
22 December 2009

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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