



**Parklands School  
Helensburgh  
Argyll and Bute Council  
21 April 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school<sup>1</sup>. We describe how children and young people<sup>2</sup> 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 parents<sup>3</sup> 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 also describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well children and 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](http://www.hmie.gov.uk). Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns and details about young people’s examination performance. 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> The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the nursery class and primary and secondary departments.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report, we will use the term ‘young people’ across all stages.

<sup>3</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**

Parklands School is a special school which serves Helensburgh, Lomond and the west of Dumbarton. The inspection was carried out in February 2009 at which time the roll was 21, including four young people who attend mainstream schools for part of their education. The school provides education for young people between five and 18, who have range of additional support needs including multiple and complex needs, physical disabilities and autism spectrum disorders.

Attendance was in line with the national average in 2006/2007. At the time of the inspection the headteacher had been absent from work for some time and the deputy headteacher had taken on the post of acting headteacher.

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

- The positive school ethos and relationships.
- Very effective arrangements for young people's care and welfare.
- Successful inclusion of young people in mainstream schools and colleges.
- The acting headteacher's leadership of teamwork in taking forward the local authority action plan.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

Young people are motivated and show positive signs of enjoyment and participation in lessons. They enjoy learning together. They are not sufficiently active in learning or working with others, however, and few have developed the confidence to lead or direct learning. In a few classes, activities stimulate young people to learn and develop new skills. In almost all classes, staff encourage young people to make choices about their learning activities. Teachers share the purposes of lessons with young people effectively and make learning relevant to their lives.

Across the school, young people are learning successfully how to stay healthy. They all have well-planned activities to keep them fit, including physical education, swimming, horse riding and hydrotherapy sessions. In these activities, they are developing new skills and confidence. Young people at the upper stages are proud of carrying out practical tasks independently, such as shopping and preparing snacks. Almost all young people have positive experiences in the

local community but these experiences are not yet planned in a way which improves their learning. Those at the senior stages are increasing their confidence and self-esteem by attending the local college and by taking charge of the 'Friday Café'. A few young people are extending their learning by attending their local school on a part-time basis.

Across the school a few young people are developing early skills in reading and writing. At the later stages, a few can read well and select and use information from different texts. However most young people are not developing their communication skills well enough. At the senior stages, they enjoy mathematics and are progressing well in using and understanding numbers and money. Young people are working towards specific learning targets within individual support plans but for a significant minority these are not well pitched. Over the last two years, young people have not gained National Qualifications. The school needs to address this weakness as a matter of urgency. This year, those at the senior stages are developing skills in literacy, numeracy, information and communications technology, independence and awareness through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses and the John Muir Award.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

Staff plan activities based on individuals' learning needs. They are beginning to enrich learning through topics involving a number of subjects. In a few cases, class programmes are not of a sufficiently high quality. The school does not yet have an effective system for tracking individuals' progress across the curriculum. Young people have appropriate opportunities to develop enterprise skills through, for example, raising money for cancer charities and the children's hospice. Sound arrangements for young people to transfer into the school successfully enable parents, staff and young people to become familiar with the environment before they arrive. Staff involve parents and partner agencies in preparing young people for leaving school. The school manages the transitions of young people who attend mainstream schools on a part-time basis very well.

All staff know the young people in their classes very well. Tasks and activities are appropriate for most young people, although this is not consistent within classes or across the school. Home-school diaries provide good links with parents about their children's learning. The school works successfully with parents to set movement targets and monitor individual progress. Support assistants effectively help young people to engage in tasks and activities. They also work very well with individuals to develop young people's communication skills. Multi-agency assessments contribute to individual support plans which provide good information about young people's needs. However, these needs are not always sufficiently well met by learning activities.

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

A strong team of specialist therapy staff works with staff and parents to set targets and help young people make progress in their learning. School staff and parents work very well together to support young people and ensure they are safe and happy in school. Parents meet regularly with school staff to discuss their child's progress. They feel well informed through parents' evenings, newsletters, and daily home-school diaries. The Parent Council is working successfully with the Active Schools coordinator to increase opportunities for young people to take part in a wider range of activities. As a result, young people enjoy taking part in lunchtime activities two days a week as part of the 'Fun First' initiative. Volunteers provide very helpful assistance for individuals at lunchtimes, in physical education, horse riding and on educational outings. Through good links with the John Muir Trust, a number of young people at the senior stages are taking part in recycling and conservation activities as part of the John Muir Award.

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

Young people are involved in improving the school through eco activities and looking after the sensory garden. Those at the upper stages regularly assist younger peers to take part in school activities. However, the school does not yet regularly seek the views of young people. Through developing effective staff teamwork and by working with parents, the acting headteacher has started to implement identified areas for improvement, including developing a new shared vision and values for the school. The school has also been working successfully on education authority improvement targets designed to improve learning and achievement. The acting headteacher helps to improve learning and teaching by observing lessons and providing helpful feedback to teachers. Teachers now regularly share and discuss good practice by visiting each others' classes and other schools. The acting headteacher and staff are committed to take action to improve further. Staff, parents, local authority representatives and partners think that there have been improvements in trust and relationships as a result of this improved self-evaluation.

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

The school has a very strong and caring ethos in which all young people are treated with dignity and respect. All staff are very good at supporting the care and welfare of young people, including their medical, social and emotional needs. They are clear about their responsibilities for protecting young people and ensuring their safety. The school has appropriate arrangements for religious observance. The school is good at celebrating individual achievements at regular assemblies and through attractive displays. Teachers and support assistants praise young people regularly. However, school staff do not yet have high enough expectations of young people's learning.

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

The acting headteacher has a clear vision for the school and a commitment to improvement. Leading by example, she is well respected and trusted by parents and colleagues. She has worked very successfully to restore motivation and a sense of teamwork amongst staff and community partners. The local authority has provided considerable support to the school over the last 18 months by reviewing the work of the school, putting in place an action plan and supporting the school to make progress. Parents now feel more involved in the life and work of the school. Staff are increasingly taking action to promote the shared vision for the school by participating in school improvements and beginning to improve aspects of learning.

## **8. What happens next?**

We will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within one year of publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved. Following that visit, we may continue to check the improvements the school has made. We may also carry out a second follow-through inspection within two years of the original inspection report. If a second follow-through inspection visit is necessary then it will result in another report to parents on the extent of improvement that the school has made.

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

- Continue to improve learning and teaching to encourage young people to be more active and independent.
- Develop young people's communication skills in a consistent way across the school.
- Improve attainment and achievement.
- Link targets set within individual support plans more closely to identified needs.
- Continue to improve the curriculum to ensure high-quality learning experiences for all.

Quality indicators help schools and nursery classes, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a school and a nursery class. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publications *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre*. 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 and nursery classes are doing. Here are the evaluations for Parklands School.

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>weak</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>

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

<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>weak</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>

**HM Inspector:** June Orr  
21 April 2009

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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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