

30 April 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Castlehead High School
Renfrewshire Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well young people are learning and achieving and how well the school supports young people to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including how it was promoting a culture of achievement. We also looked at how well the school helps young people to develop leadership skills and at approaches to improving learning and teaching. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving young people's education.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

Young people enjoy learning at school. They have very positive relationships with their teachers and feel that they are strongly encouraged to do as well as they can. Across the school, young people behave responsibly and engage well with their learning. They are motivated by the very wide range of interesting learning activities which staff provide. Young people work well together and are developing confidence in their learning, for example, when presenting their work to others. Young people who attend the Additional Support Needs and Castlehead bases learn very well and are growing in confidence as a result of the very supportive and nurturing environment. Across the school, young people respond well to the many opportunities they have to evaluate their own and others' learning. In a few lessons, young people did not have a clear enough understanding of what their teachers expected them to learn. Young people know that their views on wider aspects of the school's provision are taken into account.

Across the school, young people achieve very well. They are gaining and demonstrating high levels of confidence and leadership skills in a commendably wide range of activities. Young people have received national recognition for their very capable management of the school's arrangements for supporting younger learners with their reading. This has led to measurable improvements in some young people's reading skills. Young people leading the highly successful '*At Your Side*' initiative which aims to reduce bullying and provides support for pupils recently won a prestigious Diana Award for the impact of their efforts. Young people are developing a good understanding of the importance of active lifestyles. Substantial and increasing

numbers achieve success in a wide range of sports at local, national and international levels. Young people are proud of their school and their achievements both in school and in the wider community. At S1 to S3, most young people are developing appropriate skills in literacy and numeracy. At S4 to S6, young people's attainment in national examinations is better than in schools which serve pupils with similar needs and backgrounds. Attainment has improved in some important key measures, including the proportion achieving awards at Higher. Staff have identified where there are areas which need to be improved further.

How well does the school support young people to develop and learn?

Across the school, almost all staff set tasks and activities which are varied, interesting and appropriate for young people. As a result, almost all young people are motivated and enthusiastic in their learning. In some lessons, though, staff should ensure that tasks are set to meet the needs of individual learners more effectively. Staff are very caring and work very well together to provide young people with a highly supportive learning environment. Young people value highly the wide range of out-of-hours activities which staff provide, including opportunities to receive additional help with their studies. Across the school, staff identify young people's learning needs very effectively. Young people with additional support needs are very well supported and included in the school and wider community. The Extended Support Team ensures that young people receive appropriate support when it is required from a wide range of partner agencies.

Staff have developed a strong vision for the curriculum which takes appropriate account of Curriculum for Excellence and the school's core values. Across the stages, there is a wide range of activities through which young people can achieve and develop new skills. Staff provide young people at S1 to S3 with a broad general education. This prepares young people well in making subsequent choices based on their interests and career aspirations. Young people have good opportunities to develop skills in literacy and numeracy and an awareness of the importance of health and wellbeing. Staff should continue to work with associated primary schools to develop links across all curricular areas and to ensure that courses at S1 fully meet the needs of all learners. At S4 to S6, staff have worked well with partners to introduce more subject choices. Consortium arrangements extend curricular opportunities for young people, particularly those at S5/S6. All young people at S4 benefit from a programme in which they gain work experience.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The school has very effective approaches to self-evaluation. As a result, in recent years there have been many important improvements in the quality of provision for young people. Staff want the best for all learners and there is a strong ethos of care and ambition. There are appropriate arrangements in place for staff to share good practice and to develop new skills. Staff take young people's views into account and use these views effectively in making improvements to their teaching. The headteacher and his management team provide very strong leadership and are committed to improving the lives of all young people. Most parents feel that they are kept well informed by the school and that they have good opportunities to give their views. Almost all parents are very happy with the school.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The welcoming, respectful young people and their willingness to take responsibility.
- Staff's commitment to providing young people with high-quality learning experiences.
- Young people's achievements in a wide range of activities.
- The school's nurturing and inclusive ethos.
- The senior management team's leadership and commitment to ensuring that young people do the best they can.

We discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Continue to develop the curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence to meet the needs of all young people.

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The local 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.

Alistair Brown
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/CastleheadHighSchoolRenfrewshire.asp>.

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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