



**Gryffe High School  
Houston  
Renfrewshire Council  
20 January 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school. We describe how young people 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>1</sup> and services which support young people. We also comment on how well staff and young people work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well 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> 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**

Gryffe High School is a non-denominational school which serves Houston and Bridge of Weir and the surrounding areas. The inspection was carried out in November 2008 at which time the roll was 936. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2006/07. During session 2006/07, the school was decanted to another site to enable a major refurbishment to be carried out.

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

- The contributions of many young people to the school community.
- The strong curriculum in and out of class.
- The outstanding level of SQA awards gained by young people.
- Young people's determination to do well and the staff's commitment to ensuring they do.
- The positive relationships across the school.
- The headteacher's determination to maintain and improve a very successful school and the lead being given to improving learning by an increasing number of staff.
- The positive impact of the support team on young people with difficulties in learning.

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

- High-quality monitoring and target setting for young people with additional support needs.
- Very effective planning in English which meets young people's individual needs very well.
- The peer support system involving seniors and their younger peers.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

Almost all young people are determined to do well. They are motivated, confident and friendly. They participate willingly and enthusiastically in discussions and group activities. Many show initiative and take important leadership roles. Almost all say they enjoy learning and that the school is making them more confident. They have very good opportunities in many lessons to become independent learners who are active and engaged in learning. This good practice needs to be extended across other lessons where learning is too teacher led or the pace is too slow. Many teachers involve young people in reviewing their learning and setting improvement targets.

Almost all young people who follow practical, skills-based programmes are successful, for example in gaining awards through the Renfrewshire Vocational Programme, ASDAN or the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. High levels of voluntary activity have increased many young people's confidence and raised awareness of citizenship at a local and global level. They develop teamworking, leadership, creative and personal skills well in the wide range of activities outwith class. Examples include residential visits, enterprise, a wide range of charitable work, the student council, sports teams and activities in the arts. The school needs further to increase participation and extend the reach of such opportunities for all young people.

Young people are making good progress from their prior learning. Most have achieved at or above national levels in reading, writing and mathematics when they enter S1. Teachers ensure they build well on these aspects of prior achievement by the end of S2. The school needs to know more clearly how well young people are building on prior learning and progressing across their other subjects. By the end of S4 and by the end of S6, a very large proportion of young people achieve very high levels of success in SQA awards. This is a feature of excellence in the school. In all key measures at these stages, the school performs well above the national average. Results are much

better than in schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. Almost all young people leave school to continue their education or to go into employment.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

The school offers a very good choice of courses. Young people are given good opportunities to develop their interpersonal, enterprise, citizenship and teamworking skills through a wide range of activities. Good recent examples are the Gryffestyles health promotion event and a cross-curricular project on global diversity. To increase learning opportunities for young people, the school works very effectively with local secondary schools, college and community partners. It has strong pastoral links with local primary schools but needs to continue to improve curricular links. The school's arrangements at S5/S6 to support young people leaving school and to prepare for work are strong. Young people's physical education needs are met by core provision until the end of S5 with options available for S6.

Most staff provide tasks and activities which meet learning needs well, in many cases through work which is well matched to individual needs. Specialist support for learning staff carefully identify and meet the learning needs of young people who have difficulties with learning. They provide very high-quality support in classes across the school, often with valuable contributions from learning assistants. Young people in S6 provide important support as mentors to their younger peers. As a result of these approaches, those who require support for their learning, including those who are vulnerable, make very good progress and achieve well.

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

Achievement is being improved through the school's very good partnerships with local businesses, Reid Kerr College, youth organisations, local churches and other groups. The school has very

positive relationships with its parent council and parent-teacher association, both of which make important contributions to the life of the school. Staff work closely with parents, primary schools and other partners to ensure that young people who have difficulties with learning are supported very well. The school has very good arrangements for addressing the small number of complaints it receives. It should now consider how to report back to the parent body on how it has handled any issues raised.

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

Many young people and staff are involved in improving the school community. The student council makes a good contribution but young people are unsure about its impact. The school has recognised that staff and young people, including the student council, need to work more closely together in order to improve learning. By carefully analysing data, staff have a clear view of the strengths and areas in need of improvement in attainment from S3 onwards. This good practice now needs to be extended to all subjects in S1/S2. The school gathers young people's, the staff's and parents' views in a range of different ways. To help improve consistency and sustain improvement in learning, the school now needs to build on good practice in some areas and gather more formally young people's views about the quality of all of their learning experiences across the school. The school has plans to enable teachers to visit each others' lessons to share good practice, and recognises the need to improve the scope and impact of senior managers' visits to class. These steps should help to improve learning and teaching across the school continuously.

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

Staff and young people have very high expectations of success, based on a culture of high achievement and a very positive climate. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and attendance and young

people respond well. Achievement is celebrated widely through awards ceremonies, letters of commendation, assemblies, the local media, Renfrewshire Council awards and high-quality display. Relationships are very good. Almost all young people and their parents feel young people are treated fairly and with respect. The school's arrangements for care and welfare are robust and effective. Young people learn about equality and diversity through a range of courses and activities. The local chaplains work well with young people to provide regular religious services. The school is taking good steps to improve the promotion of health and wellbeing and is working towards improving the availability of healthy snacks and drinks. The school should continue to review its use of the behaviour support facility and reduce further the comparatively small but notable number of exclusions.

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

The headteacher has been providing very high-quality leadership over many years through his determination to maintain and improve a very successful school. Depute headteachers have complementary strengths which, together with the headteacher, make for a very effective, highly-regarded senior management team. Most principal teachers and many other teachers across the school are driving important improvements to learning in their departments, or leading important cross-curricular work or out-of-class activities. A good example of this is enterprise activity. Many young people give very good leadership and direction to aspects of the life and work of the school. Because of this strong and effective school leadership, the school was able to minimise the impact on achievement of the considerable disruption when it was decanted to another site two years ago whilst a major refurbishment was carried out.



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

- To ensure continuous improvement in learning and teaching, build on current arrangements for self-evaluation to increase their impact across the school, including by sharing good practice in lessons.
- Further improve arrangements for evaluating and reporting young people's achievement in S1/S2.

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 Gryffe High School.

|                                    |                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Improvements in performance</b> | <b>very good</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>good</b>      |

**HM Inspector:** Graham Norris

20 January 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                                    |