



**Park Mains High School
Erskine
Renfrewshire Council
15 December 2009**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, 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. 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.

¹ 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

Park Mains High School is a non-denominational school which serves the towns of Erskine, Bishopton and surrounding areas, including Inchinnan and Langbank. The roll was 1356 when the inspection was carried out in October 2009. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008. In August 2009 the school opened a support unit called the Bridge Base to cater for the more specialised needs of young people with language and communication disorders.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Polite and courteous young people who are achieving well.
- Staff's commitment to providing a wide range of opportunities for young people to achieve.
- The welcoming and purposeful learning environment.
- The wide ranging support given to young people to overcome any barriers to their learning.
- Strong working relationships with external partners.

3. Examples of good practice

- The impact and innovative organisation of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- Impact of the Home Link Service in supporting young people.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Young people work hard and are keen to learn. They are increasingly becoming more active in their learning, for example when they are involved in group tasks, undertaking research and making presentations to their classmates. Staff are working well to extend this good practice across the school. In most lessons young people have

a clear understanding of the purpose of what they are learning. They are becoming more aware of their strengths as learners and of how to improve their work by helpful feedback from teachers and their peers. Staff are aware of the need to further develop these approaches across all stages so that young people take more responsibility for progressing their learning. Young people, supported within the Bridge Base, regularly discuss their learning with staff and are helped to identify how it could be better.

Young people are developing useful skills, qualities and insights through many opportunities to achieve. A large number of learners benefit from planning their own learning as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. They are increasing their confidence, acquiring leadership skills and gaining accreditation at gold, silver and bronze levels. Young people are developing their independence and understanding of other cultures through residential experiences at home and abroad, including for example a trip to Iceland. High numbers of young people increase their confidence and display musical skills in regular performances. Students at S6 are developing a strong sense of citizenship through a range of activities including community service, organising fundraising events, and acting as buddies to younger learners. Their contribution was recognised last session with some young people receiving 'The Millennium Volunteer Award'.

Young people are progressing well in their learning. By the end of S2, almost all young people are achieving national levels in reading, with a majority achieving them in writing and mathematics. A significant number of young people are exceeding these levels. The overall performance of young people in national examinations is strong and has been consistently above or well above national averages. In almost all aspects, the school has consistently performed much better than schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. In a small number of subject areas young people are not progressing well enough from S4 into S5/S6. The school has plans in place to address these concerns.

Young people progress well from school with almost all going on to higher or further education, training or employment.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The school has in place a very broad range of courses which enable young people to progress well and achieve in almost all areas of their learning. At S5/S6, young people do not yet benefit from the nationally recommended two hours of physical education each week. Most young people do not have continuity of religious and moral education in S5/S6. Almost all young people in S4 develop important skills for work by participating in a work experience placement. Links with community partners and Reid Kerr College provide opportunities for young people to undertake vocational training. Young people, supported by the Bridge Base, are well integrated into mainstream classes. Staff, within the Base, have in place plans to develop their communication skills in more real life situations. Staff across the school, work well with local partners to provide a very good range of out-of-class learning opportunities for young people. The school has started to review the curriculum in line with *Curriculum for Excellence* and has established a number of staff working groups to take this forward. The headteacher, working with staff and other partners, should continue to develop and share the vision and direction for the new curriculum.

Staff know young people well and work effectively to meet their needs. The school links well with associated primaries to ensure they have useful information to help young people as they transfer into secondary school. Staff should continue to develop these links to provide greater continuity in learning. The support for learning department provides helpful information and advice to staff about young people with additional support needs. As a result, classroom teachers are planning well to meet the learning needs of most of the young people they teach. From S3 to S6, most young people's needs are well met in classes arranged for those of similar abilities. However, in S1/S2 the pace of learning is sometimes not brisk enough and a number of young people could be challenged more. Young

people with additional needs are very well supported by more specialist teachers and classroom assistants, working in mainstream classes and in the Bridge Base. The extended support team works very effectively with partner agencies to support young people needing more focused help.

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

Staff have established effective relationships with local employers and college staff to enhance young people's learning. Links with local groups are helping widen young people's experiences. For example, staff in the music department work with the Erskine Youth Council to support a local youth run annual music event. Effective links with local nursing homes, Erskine Hospital and other centres support young people in volunteer work as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Staff have good links with parents who are positive about the work of the school and feel they are kept well informed. The Parent Council is very active and supportive of the work of the school. Staff deal effectively with complaints from parents, young people and other members of the community.

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

In several subject areas, staff seek and act upon young people's views about how to improve programmes of work. Representative groups of young people are consulted three times a year about the work of the school. At S6 young people have an increasing say in school events, for example in organising fundraising activities and deciding on how to allocate funds. However, young people are not sufficiently involved on a consistent basis in improving the learning across the school. The headteacher is working with staff to develop new ways to address this concern. Staff are actively involved in improving young people's learning experiences. They are becoming more skilful in reflecting on

their classroom practice. They are improving their understanding of new approaches to learning through participating in staff training events. Principal teachers, faculty heads and senior managers are supporting this improvement through more regular classroom visits with helpful feedback to teachers. As a result, learning is more active and has improved in classes. The evaluation of the work of the departments and the whole school has improved. Staff consider a wide range of evidence to help them identify strengths and areas for improvement. These approaches have already had a positive impact. For example, performance in national examinations has remained strong and has improved in several subjects and opportunities for achievement have increased. Staff are aware of the need to engage more with young people, parents and partners in evaluating the work of the school and in planning for further improvement.

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

Staff have high expectations of young people. Young people respond by working hard, behaving and achieving well. Their achievements are celebrated well through awards ceremonies, newsletters and the school newspaper, the Park Mains Post. Staff are very committed to the care and welfare of young people and are well aware of child protection guidelines. Relationships between staff and young people are very positive. Young people report that work covered in classes on how to deal with bullying is helpful. A minority think that staff do not always deal with bullying incidents well enough. Young people have a good understanding of diversity through studying other cultures and religions. They participate well in a range of opportunities for effective religious observance. They are well informed about how to live healthy lives.

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

The headteacher, who has been in post for nine months, knows the school well. He has readily engaged with staff, young people and

parents to gather their views to assist in this process. He has introduced new approaches to evaluating the work of the school with a greater focus on improving learning and achievement. These are already having an impact in improving learning in the classroom. The headteacher has high aspirations for the school and its capacity for improvement. He is supported effectively by an experienced senior management team with a range of complementary skills. The strategic leadership of support for pupils is particularly strong. Staff are committed to improvement and willingly engage in working groups to take the school forward. The school needs to continue to develop the role of all staff, young people, parents and partners as it re-establishes its vision and aims for the future. In leading the school forward the headteacher should continue to increase the pace of change to ensure improved outcomes for all young people. This school has a clear sense of direction and is well placed for further improvement.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

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

- Continue to increase the pace of change and further improve outcomes for young people.
- Continue to develop and implement *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Engage young people more about how to improve learning across the school.
- Continue to strengthen links with parents and other partners, involving them in all stages of planning for improvement.

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 Park Mains High School.

Improvements in performance	very good
Learners' experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	good

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Mairi Timmons

15 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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