



**St Benedict's High School
Linwood
Renfrewshire Council
2 June 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 parents¹ 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. 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.

¹ Throughout this report, the term ‘parents’ should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

Contents

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. Examples of good practice
4. How well do young people learn and achieve?
5. How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?
6. Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?
7. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?
8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
9. What happens next?

1. The school

St Benedict's High School is a denominational school which serves Linwood, Johnstone and surrounding communities, on the outskirts of the town of Paisley. It opened in August 2006. The roll was 704 when the inspection was carried out in March 2009. The school has a support unit called the Columba Base for 17 young people with autistic spectrum disorders from across the local authority. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Courteous, well-behaved and enthusiastic young people.
- Approaches to addressing the needs of vulnerable young people.
- The quality of pastoral care.
- The strong ethos and positive relationships between staff and young people.
- The commitment of the headteacher and staff to improving outcomes for young people.

3. Examples of good practice

- Inclusive approach for young people with autistic spectrum disorders into mainstream schooling.
- Developing leadership and citizenship in senior students.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Most young people are happy at school and keen to learn. They are aware of the purpose of their lessons and engage effectively in group and class discussions. At the upper stages, they are beginning to take more responsibility for their learning and for setting targets to improve. Young people in the Columba Base and others with additional support needs have a good awareness of their progress and help set their targets for improvement. Staff need to extend this practice across the school. Young people do not have enough say in improving their learning. Too many lessons are overly teacher directed and young people are not developing skills to be independent learners.

As young people progress through the school, they are developing their confidence and sense of responsibility towards others. Through life

skills classes in S3/S4, a significant group of young people have gained accreditation in aspects of first aid. In citizenship courses, they act responsibly in addressing environmental and litter concerns. They are developing the school grounds and those of a local hospital. Young people gaining qualifications in higher personal and social education (PSE) work with vulnerable elderly people in the community. Young people at all stages have a sense of responsibility for others less fortunate and work hard to raise funds for charity. Senior students are gaining qualifications in Community Sports Leadership through working effectively with children in the local primaries. Young people in S6 are developing and demonstrating their leadership skills and sense of responsibility through a range of activities. These include paired reading, running lunchtime clubs, and a successful approach to addressing bullying issues. The school needs to widen these opportunities across the school and more effectively track young people's personal and social development.

Across the school, the majority of young people are achieving appropriate levels in reading and mathematics by the end of S2. Staff are addressing the need to improve attainment in writing where less than half are doing so. The school needs to extend its tracking and monitoring system to be able to measure progress by the end of S2 in other subject areas. By the end of S4, almost all young people are achieving minimum national standards in English and mathematics with figures in line with national averages. While there are promising trends in some subjects, overall the number of young people achieving Credit awards is below national averages. At S5/S6 there is a fluctuating picture in performance with no clear trends. The school has put in place action plans to address underperformance in particular subjects. Young people within the Columba Base are making very good progress in their learning. They are achieving their targets and progressing well from prior levels of attainment. Young people with additional support needs are also making good progress and achieving their personal targets. Most young people progress well on leaving school. Just under half continue their education with the majority of others going on into employment.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The school has in place a range of appropriate courses which help the majority of young people develop their skills in a progressive way across important curriculum areas. Staff have introduced some new courses to better meet the needs of identified groups of young people. These include XL and Activate which are helping the young people develop *skills for life* and *skills for work*. A few young people benefit from studying courses in Reid Kerr College. Young people in S4 to S6 also benefit from work experience placements. Staff are improving the PSE programme for all young people and are aware of the need to improve health education. The school has in place an appropriate religious and moral education programme to help young people develop in their faith and their understanding of other world religions. Young people in S5/S6 do not yet have sufficient time for physical education. A minority of young people in S5/S6 have limited opportunities for progression in other subject areas. Young people in the Columba Base have a well planned and appropriate overall experience. The school is at the early stages in developing the curriculum further in line with national advice in *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Most teachers are planning effectively to meet the range of learning needs. They provide appropriate tasks and are beginning to use information and communications technology (ICT) well to support learning. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and young people are not sufficiently challenged. Staff from the Columba Base and the support for learning team are very effective in helping young people with additional needs make progress and achieve their targets. Where there is good practice, specialist staff and support assistants work effectively with teachers to support young people within classes. This approach needs to be more consistently applied across the school. The school works effectively with the associated primaries to support young people as they transfer into S1. Staff also work well with *Careers Scotland* to assist young people as they prepare to leave school.

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

The school works well with parents to support young people. The school has an active Parent Council and parents welcome regular communications through newsletters, the website, reports and other events. Parents of young people in the Columba Base are fully involved in helping to set and review learning targets. This good practice should be extended across the school. The extended support team works effectively to bring together a range of specialist staff and partners to plan and provide well-targeted support. A specialist teacher provides valuable support for young people with English as an additional language. Staff have formed good links with Reid Kerr College and with local business partners to provide valuable work experience. The school deals 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?

Most young people feel they are treated with respect and that staff listen to their views. The majority of young people, however, do not feel they have a say in improving learning. The school has already taken steps to widen the role and impact of the pupil council. Within the Columba Base, young people's views are regularly sought to help improve teaching and learning approaches. Young people in S6 are encouraged to participate in the life of the school and are active in improving experiences for their younger peers, particularly in the lunchtime clubs and in anti-bullying work. Most staff feel they are consulted effectively and involved in identifying areas for improvement. They take part in whole school and departmental working groups to help develop and introduce new approaches to improve experiences for young people. Staff are beginning to develop suitable approaches towards judging the impact of their work and of new initiatives. This includes closer study of performance in national examinations. The school is not yet doing enough to evaluate the quality of young people's learning in class. Regular classroom visits by senior

managers and faculty heads are not yet an established practice. However, staff are beginning to share good practice and are starting to consult young people more effectively about improving learning.

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

Relationships across the school are positive. All staff have received appropriate training in child protection and are alert to the social and emotional needs of young people. Staff with responsibility for pastoral care are particularly effective and support more vulnerable young people well. The school has strong links with local parishes. The chaplains support the school well. Young people learn about cultural and religious diversity in a range of subjects. The school's approach to promoting health and wellbeing needs to be developed on a more consistent basis. Most staff have high expectations for young people's behaviour and attendance but some need to have higher expectations of young people's achievement. Most young people feel safe and cared for in school. The majority feel that the school deals well with bullying issues.

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

The headteacher and staff have a shared vision for helping all young people to achieve their potential within the context of a strong caring Catholic ethos. While young people and parents support the vision, the school needs to involve them more actively in achieving it. The headteacher has worked hard to establish a positive climate for effective learning to take place. Supported by the depute headteachers, he has effectively managed the establishment of the new school and its sense of identity. The challenge now is to improve leadership for learning at all levels involving all staff, young people and their parents fully.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that the school, with the continued support of the education authority, 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.

- Improve the school's approaches to self-evaluation with a focus on improving learning and outcomes for young people.
- Develop the curriculum to better meet the needs of all young people, taking account of national advice on *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Improve the personal and social development of young people, ensuring a focus on health and wellbeing.
- Continue to improve approaches to learning, giving more responsibility to young people as independent learners.

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 St Benedict's High School.

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

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

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Mairi Timmons

2 June 2009

To find out more about inspections or get an electronic copy of this report go to www.hmie.gov.uk. Please contact the Business Management and Communications Team (BMCT) if you wish to enquire about our arrangements for translated or other appropriate versions.

If you wish to comment about any of our inspections, contact us at HMIEenquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk or alternatively you should write in the first instance to BMCT, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Our complaints procedure is available from our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can write to our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330, fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website at www.spsso.org.uk.

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

Crown Copyright 2009
HM Inspectorate of Education.