

Education, Children and Families Committee

Sub-committee on Standards for Children and Families

2 pm, Monday, 9 June 2014

Secondary School Inspection at Liberton High School

Item number	5.1
Report number	
Wards	Ward 15: Southside/Newington Ward 16: Liberton/Gilmerton Ward 17: Portobello/Craigmillar

Links

Coalition pledges	PO5
Council outcomes	CO2
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3

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Executive summary

Secondary School Inspection at Liberton High School

Summary

- Members should be aware that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), now known as Education Scotland (ES), undertake an annual sample of inspections across Scotland (approximately 240 per year) covering nursery, primary, special and secondary schools. A letter to parents/carers on each inspection is published approximately three months after the inspection. On the basis of this letter the school with the support of the authority amends its improvement plan to take account of any agreed areas for improvement.
- Inspectors usually revisit a school within a year of the publication of the letter where weak or unsatisfactory practice has been identified. For all other schools inspected the local authority will inform the parents about the progress made in improving the quality of education.
- This letter (Appendix 1) and evaluations (Appendix 2) advises the Sub-committee on the outcomes of the initial inspection.

Recommendations

The Sub-committee is requested to:

- note the findings of the report including the areas where the education authority and the school should continue to improve the school; and
- receive an authority inspection follow through report.

Measures of success

The report identified the following key strengths:

- improved school ethos;
- coordinated support for young people requiring additional help in their learning;
- young people's achievements across an increasing range of opportunities, well supported by partnership working; and
- the headteacher's positive start in setting a new direction for the school.

Financial impact

There are no financial implications contained in the ES report.

Equalities impact

There are considered to be no infringements of the rights of the child.

Tracking of pupil performance by gender and Black Minority Ethnic (BME) is undertaken at school level and there are no adverse impacts.

Sustainability impact

None.

Consultation and engagement

Parents, pupils and staff completed an ES questionnaire prior to the inspection.

Background reading / external references

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports>

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Appendices	1. Inspection letter to parent/carer 2. Evaluations

25 March 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Liberton High School
The City of Edinburgh 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 the impact of its work with partners, its approach to enhancing leadership and the steps it has taken to address inconsistencies in 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?

Most young people are well behaved and engage positively in their learning. They work well with each other in pairs and groups, listen well and share ideas. A few young people are not engaged well enough in their learning. While stimulating high quality learning is in evidence, such good practice is not yet sufficiently widespread across the school. Teachers ensure that young people understand the purpose of the activities in lessons, but young people do not yet have a clear enough understanding of their strengths and next steps in relation to their learning. We have asked teachers to provide more regular and detailed feedback to young people about their work, and to continue to raise expectations of what young people can do and achieve. Young people's learning experiences are meaningfully extended through trips to places of interest and other opportunities such as outdoor residential excursions. Through effective links with Edinburgh University, young people are gradually raising their aspirations of possible options beyond school. The revised pupil council has given young people more influence in bringing about school improvements. Subject departments are gathering and responding to the views of young people about their learning more regularly. Young people have a positive view of the school and the improving quality of their learning and relationships.

Young people at all stages are achieving well across the wide and increasing range of opportunities provided. Commendably, the school has identified those young people who do not participate in any out-of-class learning, and is taking action to ensure they all get involved, with the aim of increasing their personal achievements. All of S1 are engaged in the Junior Award Scheme for Scotland. Other groups take part in outdoor activities as part of their involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and

the John Muir Award. Through involvement in Neighbourhood Partnership and with West Edinburgh Action team, young people are supporting the long-term unemployed in developing their technology skills. Musicals, dance and talent shows develop young people's confidence and performance skills and encourage their appreciation of the performing arts. Young people benefit from very good opportunities for leadership, volunteering, work experience and sport. Some young people in S5 and S6 act as peer educators for those in S2 as part of the 'Cool, Calm and Connected' programme, which is supporting young people's mental health. Young people are gaining valuable skills for learning, life and work through these experiences. The school does not yet have a clear enough view of young people's progress from S1 to S3, including their progress in literacy and numeracy. The school's performance in a few of the key national measures of attainment, mainly at S5, has been improving. In S6, almost all young people presented for Advanced Highers achieve success. Over the last two years, increasing numbers of young people have gone on to a positive destination on leaving school, including further study, employment or training. Overall, levels of attainment from S4 to S6 are not yet high enough. From S4 to S6, performance in national examinations is notably poorer than in schools serving young people with similar needs and from similar backgrounds and below national averages. There are very few improving trends in subjects. Staff have recognised the need for improvement and are taking a number of important steps aimed at raising attainment.

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

The curriculum supports young people to learn and develop well. Courses from S1 to S3 are based on Curriculum for Excellence guidance. Staff are continuing to evaluate and develop the curriculum at these stages. They are working to improve courses and programmes to ensure young people's experiences prepare them for S4 and beyond. There are a number of useful changes already planned for next session including more time for learning in modern languages. Young people develop their citizenship, enterprise and employability skills through well-planned opportunities such as the Christmas art project. They are able to make links across different areas of their learning through a range of projects on themes such as the Holocaust memorial, the Edinburgh Food bank project and the Commonwealth Games. The approach taken here should be further developed to provide young people with more challenge in their learning. Young people also need a more consistent approach to developing their literacy and numeracy skills across all curricular areas. Young people in S5 and S6 select their courses from a good range of options from Intermediate 1 to Advanced Higher levels. Young people's health and wellbeing is very well supported through the allocation of time for physical education in line with national recommendations and this is further extended to all young people in S5 and S6. A small number of young people in the senior school take part in the South East Scotland Academies Partnership and commit to attending courses outwith school, mainly in the evenings, at Edinburgh College and Queen Margaret University. This is helping to build their confidence and improve their skills for work.

In a few lessons, teachers use a good range of teaching methods to meet the needs of a wide range of young people. In these lessons, teachers adapt their questioning and the tasks given to provide an appropriate level of support and challenge for all young people. Teachers now need to adopt such good practice more regularly across the school. In the best lessons, open-ended tasks allow young people to engage in

appropriately challenging problem-solving activities. Young people with significant social and emotional needs are provided with a comprehensive range of support. Individualised support packages enable young people to remain in school and the local community. Staff work hard together and are committed to meeting the needs of all learners. Reliable systems and processes are in place to identify young people's needs and provide appropriate advice for class teachers. Commendably, a Young Carers group has recently been set up to ensure more consistent approaches to providing them with support. The school needs to build the skills and knowledge of all staff further to help them support young people who require additional help in their learning. It also needs to review the range of additional support programmes for young people experiencing difficulties. The school needs to continue to develop the skills of staff in managing young people's behaviour in lessons.

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

The school has recently redesigned, with some success, its approaches to improving its work. Many staff demonstrate a commitment to reflecting on their practice by being members of the various teacher learning communities across the school, where they share practice and lead learning opportunities for other staff. This work is not yet leading to enough improvement in young people's learning experiences across the school. The school's approach to tracking and monitoring young people's progress at the senior stages has improved. Young people who are not attaining in line with predictions are identified at an early stage and appropriate support is put in place to help them address aspects of underachievement. The school has yet to put in place a reliable process for tracking young people's progress from S1 to S3 to ensure they attain as highly as possible. Parents and young people have been regularly consulted by the school on their views about the school's work. Staff take part in business breakfasts to enhance their skills and develop their practice. Subject departments now all have a range of activities aimed at identifying strengths in their work and aspects for improvement. These activities require to be more focussed on improving the quality of learning and teaching. The headteacher has led the new approach to self-evaluation and improving the quality of the curriculum well. There have been some early signs of improvement such as attendance and more positive, encouraging and supportive relationships. Overall, it is too early for many of these revised approaches to have led to improvements in young people's learning experiences and achievements.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Improved school ethos.
- Coordinated support for young people requiring additional help in their learning.
- Young people's achievements across an increasing range of opportunities, well supported by partnership working.
- The headteacher's positive start in setting a new direction for the school.

We discussed with staff and the City of Edinburgh Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Ensure young people benefit from high-quality learning experiences in all lessons and have their learning needs consistently well met across the school.

- Continue to build young people's confidence in identifying their own strengths and next steps through regular high-quality feedback.
- Increase expectations of what young people can achieve.
- Improve attainment at all stages.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

Our Area Lead Officer will work with the City of Edinburgh Council to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved within one year of the publication of this letter. Depending on the outcome, we will then decide whether we will carry out a further inspection.

Donald A. Macleod
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/LibertonHighSchoolEdinburghCity.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.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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 publication *How good is our school?*¹. 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 Liberton High School.

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

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

A copy of the full letter is available on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/LibertonHighSchoolEdinburghCity.asp>

¹ *How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence: part 3*, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2007, http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/HowgoodisourschoolJtEpart3_tcm4-684258.pdf. Please note that the term "adequate" in the document has been replaced with "satisfactory".