



**Belmont House School
Glasgow
8 December 2009**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹ and young people know whether their school² 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 in which young people are involved. We also gather the views of young people, parents, staff and members of the school 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. 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.

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

² The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

Contents

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

1. The school

Belmont House School is a non-denominational independent day school with a nursery class. It serves a wide geographical area, with children and young people coming from eight local authorities in the west of Scotland. The roll was 298, including 15 in the nursery class, when the inspection was carried out in October 2009. The nursery serves children from age three to five years and the school serves young people from junior 1 to senior 6.

2. Particular strengths of the school and nursery

- Quality of learning experiences for children in the nursery.
- Contributions made by enthusiastic, caring and confident children and young people to the school and nursery.
- Achievements of children and young people across the school and nursery.
- Positive and inclusive ethos across the school and nursery.
- The engagement of staff in providing a range of high quality out-of-school hours activities.
- The Principal's leadership of learning.

3. How well do children and young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children and young people are enthusiastic, keen to learn and contribute very well to the school and nursery. They have positive relationships with their teachers and each other. They are involved in a wide range of purposeful learning experiences, within the classroom and through well planned visits. In the nursery, children are encouraged in their learning and make choices and talk about their interests. They are happy and well settled into the daily routines of the nursery. Across the school, young people are gaining more responsibility for their learning. In most classes, young people use information and communications technology confidently to improve their learning. Teachers need to take further account of the views of

young people when planning lessons. Children and young people are safe, happy and well supported.

Children and young people achieve in many ways. In the nursery, children are developing a sense of responsibility, for example by being eco-monitors. Across the school, young people increase their confidence and develop a range of personal and social skills by taking part in many sporting and cultural activities. The annual 'Expressions' event provides a very good opportunity for young artists and musicians to showcase their work. Young people learn how to work well together through participating in school shows and enterprise events. They demonstrate responsibility by organising fundraising events for various charities and participating in the community involvement programme. Many young people gain a range of skills and experiences through taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. A high percentage achieve an award. Senior students develop caring attitudes by being buddies to younger pupils. Commendably, the school is beginning to track and monitor the achievements of children and young people more systematically. This will help to extend opportunities for them to achieve even more.

Children and young people are making very good progress in all aspects of their learning. In the nursery, they listen well to adults and to one another and are learning to take turns when having a conversation. They are beginning to recognise their name in print and a few know individual letters and sounds. In early mathematics, most children can count to ten and are learning to measure simple objects in their play. The school has maintained consistently high standards of attainment in recent years. In the junior school, almost all children have well developed skills in talking and listening. Almost all are attaining appropriate levels in reading and most are attaining these levels in writing, with improvement this session. Almost all children are attaining appropriate levels in mathematics. A significant number of children at almost all stages achieve national levels early, in reading, writing and mathematics. Young people are achieving very well in Transitus, S1 and S2. Almost all are making very good progress from their previous levels of attainment. In recent years, the performance of

young people in S3, S4, S5 and S6 in national examinations has been generally well above the national average. Young people with additional support needs also make very good progress. Almost all young people who leave in S5 or S6 are well supported into university or college.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The school and nursery staff provide a very good range of well-planned and personalised activities to meet the needs of individual children and young people. Across the school and nursery, teachers are developing high quality experiences for children and young people in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*. The moves from nursery to junior school and on to senior school are very well managed and young people continue to make progress in their learning at each stage. From S3, young people choose from a very good range of options enabling them to build on what they have already learned. There are very good opportunities for young people to improve their understanding of personal, social and health issues, and to develop their skills in enterprise and citizenship across the school. The development of literacy and numeracy across the school is proceeding well and there is some innovative practice across the school.

In the nursery, staff know children well and skilfully interact with them to support their individual learning needs. Staff help children become confident and successful in their learning. Across the school, most teachers take account of individual needs in choosing tasks, activities and resources in classes. In the best lessons, young people learn at a rate which motivates and challenges them. Teachers give them opportunities to assess their own and others' learning. In a few lessons the pace could be brisker and young people encouraged to think more for themselves. Support for learning staff identify young people's learning needs effectively and provide well-judged individual support in classes and in the support base. In addition, they provide very good information and advice to their colleagues. They now need to make sure that young people with additional needs and their

families are fully involved in developing targets to improve young people's learning.

4. How well do staff work with others to support the learning of children and young people?

Nursery staff have developed strong, positive relationships with parents. Parents work alongside staff to help with topic work. Regular visitors, including a dentist and forensic scientist, enrich children's and young people's learning experiences. Across the school, pupil progress reports and parents' evenings keep parents very well informed about their children's progress. Parents receive regular and informative newsletters. The school works very well with local businesses to provide a range of work experience opportunities for young people. Partner agencies such as the orthoptist and speech and language therapists work effectively alongside staff to improve outcomes for children and young people. The business awareness day, organised in partnership with a range of local business leaders, provides young people with a better understanding of enterprising approaches to learning. The board of governors works closely alongside the Principal to ensure high quality teaching and learning across the school and nursery. The few complaints the school receives are dealt with very effectively.

5. Are staff, children and young people actively involved in improving their school community?

Staff are highly committed to the school and take an active role in its improvement through working groups on literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, science and enterprise in education. Across the school, children and young people take their responsibilities seriously and make an effective contribution to the school through the pupil councils and eco-committees. They are confident and enthusiastic about helping within the school and keen to use their talents further. Staff are very keen to reflect and improve the work of the school. They

take part in professional development opportunities and have worked alongside a number of specialists to improve learners' achievement and attainment. They use a very wide range of information, including lesson observations and valuable surveys of parental opinions, effectively to help them decide how to improve teaching and learning. The school needs to continue to develop the range of opportunities for children and young people to have a say on how teaching and learning can be improved.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children and young people?

The school and nursery sets high but realistic expectations of what young people can achieve. The behaviour of children and young people is outstanding. Almost all children and young people feel valued and included in all aspects of the life of the school. Across the school and nursery, there is a very good ethos of hard work and achievement. Staff are aware of procedures relating to keeping children and young people safe. Teachers use praise very well in classes to motivate children and young people and celebrate their successes. Young people speak highly of the praise system and enjoy the house competitions. Departments, for example modern languages, are exploring different ways of celebrating young people's many successes. Children in the junior school are responding very positively to the introduction of personal achievement folders. The regular newsletter helps to extend the culture of achievement developed in the school. This could be further improved by including articles written by young people from across the school. Young people demonstrate a very high level of care and concern for staff and each other.

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

The recently reviewed vision, values and aims have helped to focus the school on what it wants to achieve. These are clearly impacting on

the work of teachers, children and young people. The school and nursery improvement plans are used well to set the direction of change and manage it at a pace the school can sustain. The Principal, supported by his senior team, has guided staff to a better understanding of the use of information to improve learning and teaching. Almost all parents feel the school is well led. A very good number of opportunities allow staff to take lead roles such as chairing working groups, organising careers events and leading out of school hours activities. The school now needs to continue to extend opportunities for leadership for learning to all staff to provide more time for senior managers to focus on quality improvement. Young people have a very good range of leadership opportunities such as the eco-monitors in nursery, membership of the pupil councils, prefect roles, charity fundraising and the strong lead given by the junior eco-committee. The leadership of young people could be extended to help support the improvement of teaching and learning. Overall, the school has a clear capacity to build on existing good practice to continue to improve self-evaluation and the achievements of children and young people.

8. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school and nursery, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The board of governors will inform parents about the school's and nursery's progress as part of the arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its school and nursery.

We have agreed the following area for improvement with the school and board of governors.

- Continue to develop self-evaluation in order to ensure young people are more involved and consistently challenged in their learning.

Quality indicators help schools and nursery classes and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a school and a nursery class. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publications *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre*.

Here are the evaluations for Belmont House School and Nursery Class

School

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

Nursery class

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Improvements in performance | very good |
| Children's experiences | very good |
| Meeting learning needs | very good |

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|
| The curriculum | very good |
| Improvement through self-evaluation | good |

HM Inspector: David Gregory

8 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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