

BALERNO COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

FOLLOW THROUGH REPORT

1. The inspection

HM Inspectors published a report on the quality of education in Balerno Community High School in December 2011. Subsequently the school, with support from the education authority, amended the school improvement plan to take account of the findings of the inspection. An education authority team recently visited the school to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to develop the quality of its education, including the areas identified for improvement and produced a progress report for parents.

This report tells you how well young people are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best.

2. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Areas for improvement from original report:

Continue to improve young people's experience to reflect Curriculum for Excellence more fully.

Across the school, young people continued to learn and achieve very well in a wide range of activities. They were well behaved, polite and helpful. They felt safe and well cared for and confident of getting help when needed. In almost all lessons learners were fully engaged. Young people had more opportunities to review their learning and evaluate how they learnt and there were improved opportunities for them to discuss their progress. The school should now build on this and continue to increase consistency of approaches in all classes. Questioning was used effectively to encourage young people to think independently and to check understanding.

Young people responded very well to an increased range of opportunities to achieve. More young people have achieved success in a wide range of nationally accredited awards, including the Junior Awards Scheme Scotland and Saltire Awards. These achievements are celebrated and shared through house assemblies and a new annual achievement ceremony.

Young people in S1/S2/S3 continued to make good progress in their broad general education. From S4 young people have continued to achieve in programmes and courses, well above national averages and in line with schools where young people have similar needs and backgrounds. Young people's achievements effectively prepared them for leaving school and an increased number have moved on successfully to positive destinations in higher education, training or work. The school has introduced a system of tracking learners' progress which they should continue to develop.

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

Areas for improvement from original report:

Continue to improve young people's experience to reflect Curriculum for Excellence more fully.

Staff have made positive progress in developing the curriculum, taking into account Curriculum for Excellence guidance. At S1/S2/S3, young people benefitted from a broad range of courses, including elective activities in S3 which provided learners with some choice in their learning activities. There were improved links with associated primary schools to help staff to build more effectively on young people's learning. Interdisciplinary events, including 'Project Scrooge' in partnership with the Royal Lyceum Theatre, helped young people develop a wide range of leadership and learning skills.

Staff continued to be highly committed to young people's care and welfare. Support for learning staff were skilful in identifying when any young person needed additional support and have improved planning to meet young people's needs. This information was shared effectively with relevant staff. Learning assistants have benefitted from training and continued to provide valuable support for young people with specific learning difficulties.

Teachers continued to choose learning approaches which interested and motivated young people and were better at providing a range of tasks more suited to the needs of individual learners. Teachers used information and communications technology (ICT) confidently to present lessons. However, young people did not routinely use ICT to support their own learning in class. Young people worked well in groups where they determined their own pace of learning. Different groupings were used successfully as a strategy to raise attainment in the senior school.

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

Areas for improvement from original report:

Increase the effectiveness of approaches to improving the school's performance, taking better account of the views of young people, parents and partners in the community.

There were significant improvements in the school's approaches to improving the quality of its work. The headteacher had taken a decisive lead in building an ethos of collegiality, collaboration and partnership working. Curriculum leaders had undertaken a team working and leadership training day and should continue to build on the approaches shared at the event.

All teachers were members of groups focusing on improving learning experiences for all young people. These Teacher Learning Communities were well established and provided an effective forum for discussion, sharing good practice, and identifying future learning and teaching priorities. The work of these groups was beginning to have a positive impact in a number of areas, for example, active learning approaches which were becoming embedded. The structure of the Teacher Learning Communities offered all staff opportunities to take on leadership roles across the school. Teachers were increasingly seeking young people's views on learning.

The senior leadership team, working with curriculum and pupil support leaders, had introduced more rigorous quality assurance procedures with teams assigned to groups of faculties. They followed an agreed calendar of coordinated activities. There was greater emphasis on seeking views of learners and their parents on whole school matters.

5 Conclusion

With support from the education authority, Balerno Community High School provided a very good standard of education for its young people. The school had progressed well since the inspection and had made appropriate improvements in light of the inspection findings. The education authority will not publish further reports in connection with the December 2011 HMIE report.

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