



**St Stephen's High School
Port Glasgow
Inverclyde Council
25 May 2010**

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 there will also be 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

St Stephen's High School is a denominational school which serves the communities of Port Glasgow, Kilmacolm and parts of east Greenock. The roll was 575 when the inspection was carried out in March 2010. Young people's attendance was below the national average in 2008/2009. Plans are underway to build a new shared campus with Port Glasgow High School in 2013, with a decant into St Stephen's High School scheduled for 2011.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The active contribution of all staff to the positive climate for learning and strong Catholic community of faith.
- The behaviour, enterprise and leadership skills of young people, particularly those in the senior school.
- Strong partnerships with the local community which are extending young people's achievements.
- The headteacher's vision and leadership which is driving school improvement.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the school almost all young people are courteous, friendly and positive about learning. Almost all feel that the school helps them to become more confident. Young people are increasingly aware of their strengths as learners and areas they need to improve on. This good practice needs to be extended. In a number of departments, young people are developing valuable skills in information and communications technology (ICT) which are enhancing their learning and motivation. These allow them to create computer games at S1/S2 and by S6, impressive ICT-based presentations using film and music to support their arguments. Across the school, more young people would benefit from such opportunities to take more responsibility for and be independent in their learning. The school increasingly seeks and takes account of young people's views about their learning and almost all young people feel their views are listened to. Most young people are developing their talents and confidence through the wide-ranging programme of sporting, cultural and musical experiences. Over 100 young people across all stages participated in

a remarkable Transform Inverclyde Bolt production which included elements of dance, drama, film and creative writing. Through the Inverclyde Peace Initiative, senior pupils are playing a valuable role as mentors and helping to support younger learners. A group in S5 recently won an award for the best report at a local young enterprise competition. At S4, those in the Connect Leadership Group were awarded the national Diana Certificate of Excellence for their work as positive role models. Across the school, increasing numbers of young people are achieving well through Young Scot and The Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and through Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) programmes. Staff have identified the need to promote and monitor more closely the wider achievements of all young people.

By the end of S2, the majority of young people achieve appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. There is an improving trend in reading and writing. At S4, performance is improving and examination results are in line with schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. The school is aware that attainment at S5 could be better. By the end of S6, performance is well below the national average but better than in comparator schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. When young people leave school, most go onto university, college or training or are successful in getting a job.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The school is well prepared for *Curriculum for Excellence*. All departments are enthusiastically promoting literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing which is supporting young people to make links across their learning. At S1/S2, the Reading for Gold Initiative is helping them to become more confident readers. The school is offering more flexible course options which cater better for the individual needs of young people. *Learn2Learn* seminars are helping to improve their attainment. Staff offer innovative programmes in enterprise and vocational education including Virtual Work Experience. The school provides at least two hours of quality physical education in

S1 to S4 but not S5 to S6. It has strong pastoral links with its associated primary schools and should continue to strengthen curricular links to ensure continuity and progression in young peoples' learning.

Teachers know young people very well and are committed to helping them achieve their best. When they plan most effectively, they set tasks and activities that are at the right level of difficulty for all young people. Some teachers have regular one-to-one discussions with individuals about their learning targets which are helping to keep them on track. This good practice should be extended across all departments. Staff in support for learning, behaviour support and pastoral care work successfully with teachers to meet the learning needs of those requiring additional support. Behaviour support staff work very effectively with partner agencies to support young people who are at risk of missing out on education. Classroom and support assistants provide well-judged support to young people who have additional learning needs. Young people benefit from innovative, creative teaching in a number of departments across the school.

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

The Parent Council is highly supportive of the school. Almost all parents feel welcomed in the school and appreciate the quality of information in their child's progress reports. Staff work closely with a commendable variety of partners including local businesses, the Enterprise Centre and community learning and development to support young people's learning and extend their achievements. This is helping to improve attendance and re-engage the most vulnerable young people into education. Teaching and support staff promote health and wellbeing across all aspects of school life. Staff work very closely with the parish priest and local diocese to foster the Catholic ethos. The school has very effective arrangements for dealing with complaints.

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

All staff make a very positive contribution to the positive climate for learning in the school and the strong Catholic community of faith. Most young people feel that they have a say in making the school better. The pupil council makes a strong contribution to the school through, for example, promoting positive behaviour and improving the dining hall. The headteacher is developing the skills of all staff in analysing attainment information which is leading to more focused developments within departments. Senior staff release teachers to visit each other's classes and to learn from one another. The growing culture of self-evaluation is helping staff to share good practice in learning, teaching and improving young people's performance. This is enhancing the school's standing in the community.

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

The school is very welcoming and relationships between adults and young people are positive. All staff give high priority to the inclusion, safety and welfare of young people. Most have high expectations of young people's learning, attendance and behaviour and use praise effectively to build confidence. Staff have been successful in taking steps to reduce levels of exclusions and absence. Most young people are proud of their school and are respectful of one another. Their wide ranging achievements are celebrated through regular house assemblies, informative newsletters and the annual awards ceremony. Weekly assemblies provide valuable opportunities for religious worship and sharing values. Almost all young people feel safe and think that staff treat them fairly and with respect. All staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and have received relevant training.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school which is shared with his senior leaders, staff, young people and parents.

He has established a culture of change which is driving school improvement and making a difference to the lives of young people. Principal teachers are working together well with staff and young people to create a learning community which is improving achievement, behaviour and attendance. All support staff play a valuable role in the life of the school. The emphasis on self-evaluation and leadership for learning leaves the school well placed to improve the quality of young people's learning.

8. What happens next?

The inspection team was able to rely on the school's robust self-evaluation. As a result, it was able to change its focus during the inspection to support further improvements within the school.

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 develop more consistent approaches to self-evaluation to ensure improved outcomes for young people across the school.
- Take further steps to more consistently meet the learning needs of all young people and improve arrangements for promoting and tracking their wider achievements.
- Continue to build the confidence of all young people to take responsibility for and become more independent in their learning.

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 Stephen's High School.

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

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

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Fiona Carlisle
25 May 2010

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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