

29 May 2012

Dear Parent/Carer

**St Peter the Apostle High School
West Dunbartonshire Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I visited and inspected your child's school. Throughout our visit, we talked to many parents and young people and we worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well young people were learning and achieving and how well the school supported 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 interdisciplinary learning and partnership working. We also looked at the school's approaches to supporting young people, self-evaluation and distributed leadership. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school was at improving children's education.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

Overall, young people learn and achieve very well. Most young people enjoy learning at school and value the range of experiences that help them develop skills for learning, life and work. Relationships across the school community are very positive and young people feel very well supported in their learning. They feel safe and well cared for and are treated fairly. They respond very well to opportunities to work together in groups and willingly share ideas and learn from each other. Young people's views are regularly sought and influence a range of work in the school. Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear but young people would benefit from more feedback on their own learning to help them take greater responsibility for their progress. This would help young people become more independent in their learning.

Young people are achieving very well in a range of sporting, cultural and citizenship activities. They are developing important skills and gaining confidence as they participate in a wide variety of activities and clubs offered by staff and partners of the school. Young people have enjoyed success at local and national level in both team and individual sporting events. Many perform in musical events and participate in the school show. At all stages, young people take a pride in their school and actively promote the school's strong Catholic ethos. Young people in S6 have responded very positively to the Caritas programme and play a strong role in the spiritual life of the school and its community. Across the school, young people develop their understanding of global citizenship by supporting local and international charities and through the school's well established exchange links with a school in Tanzania.

Young people respond well to opportunities to develop their leadership skills. They represent their peers on year group forums and on the pupil council, organise school events such as the mini Olympics and Christmas Fair and act as guides and buddies to younger pupils. The school celebrates young people's achievements well. Across S1 and S2 achievements are monitored and tracked by the school. Young people set themselves targets and regularly review their progress.

At S1 and S2 most young people are making good progress in their broad general education. They are developing well their literacy skills across their learning. From S4 to S6 in most measures, young people's attainment is in line with national averages. In the two years since the school was established there are clear signs of improvements in attainment at S4 and S5. There are some examples of individual young people attaining very well. The school is successful in supporting young people to move on after school and most moved to employment, training, further or higher education.

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

Within its caring and inclusive learning community, young people across the school are very well supported to develop and learn. Most teachers plan tasks and activities well to meet the needs of young people. They have high expectations for all learners and provide extensive opportunities to support learning in and beyond school hours. Young people appreciate this and the commitment shown by teachers to help them succeed. Pupil support staff have regular conversations with young people to discuss their progress and achievements. The school has a very effective approach to quickly identify, and act to resolve, any barriers to learning. Young people with a wide range of additional needs are very well supported by close collaboration between the school and many partner services. The pupil support team work very effectively with staff across the school to support young people's social, emotional and learning needs. As a result of this range of successful approaches those who require support are making good progress and achieve well.

Staff have worked with young people, parents and partners to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of a wide range of learners and to take close account of Curriculum for Excellence. The work with primary schools to develop the 'Swinging Sixties' transition project has helped young people transfer with confidence to secondary school. New courses in S1 and S2 offer a variety of learning approaches which help young people develop their knowledge and skills. Staff are working together to help young people make more links in their learning. The curriculum from S3 to S6 provides a wide range of courses leading to certification at various levels. New courses, including Skills for Work courses, are continuously being developed to respond to the needs of young people. The school works very effectively with a wide range of partners, across public, business and voluntary sectors to broaden the range of opportunities available in the curriculum.

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

The school has very effective approaches to evaluate and improve the quality of its work. Staff are highly committed to using self-evaluation to improve the quality of young people's learning and achievements. They use a wide range of effective

approaches to gathering and using evidence for improvement. The school has a rigorous approach to reviewing the results from SQA qualifications. The headteacher and depute headteachers work with principal teachers to draw up action plans for raising attainment which are regularly reviewed. The setting, monitoring and tracking of 'aspirational targets' for young people is further supporting this work. Almost all staff are involved in the extensive range of *Connected for Excellence* working groups. They are very effective in taking forward school improvements. Teachers across the school take on many leadership roles and support the professional development of colleagues both in school and beyond. Together, all this work has built St Peter the Apostle High School into a professional learning community striving for continuous improvement. The headteacher is highly respected by staff, parents and young people. He has provided strong and highly effective leadership to build a new school community that is ambitious for young people. He is very well supported by the depute headteachers and collectively they provide strong strategic leadership for taking forward the school aims of helping all young people achieve their potential in each aspect of their development.

This inspection of your school found the following key strengths.

- The ethos of the school as a community of faith with mutually supportive relationships which encourage young people to learn and achieve very well.
- Young people who are ambitious and proud of their school.
- The innovative and dynamic work of staff across the school in leading school improvements.
- The school's work with a wide range of partners to meet the needs of young people.
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher in building St Peter the Apostle High School into a vibrant learning community.

We discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Build on the good practice in learning and teaching to help young people develop as successful and independent learners.
- Continue to take forward the very effective work in developing the curriculum.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are very satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are very confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified aspects of innovative practice which we would like to explore further in order to share the practice with others. As a result we will work with the school and local authority in order to record and share more widely the innovative practice. We will ask the school, in discussion with the local authority, to let parents know the outcome of the innovative practice visit(s).

Carol McDonald
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.hmie.gov.uk/ViewEstablishment.aspx?id=12084&type=3> .

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