

22 March 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

Clifton Hall School, Newbridge, Edinburgh

HM Inspectors recently visited Clifton Hall School. The visit was part of our quality improvement and professional engagement visits with independent schools which complement the general programme of inspections. The approach allows us to maintain our knowledge of schools in the independent sector throughout Scotland, and provides assurance to parents on the school's capacity for evaluating its own work and making improvements which have a direct impact on the quality of experiences for its young people. Our visit was based on the school's self-evaluation and priorities identified for school improvement. During our visit inspectors talked to staff and young people and worked together with the headmaster and senior staff about the planned developments to ensure outcomes for children and young people continue to improve.

How well does the school ensure outcomes for children / young people continue to improve?

The headmaster, senior managers and staff across the school are committed to ensuring that self-evaluation approaches lead to improvement. The staff in the nursery, led by the highly effective early years coordinator, are very reflective practitioners. Senior managers in the junior and senior schools encourage staff to be reflective and to collaborate well in classes and departments, to plan and achieve improvements. The school has reviewed and updated their child protection and safeguarding policy and guidance to support children's wellbeing and safety. Children and young people are very positive about their school and comment on having confidence in the school's ability to manage any issues or concerns. The care and welfare of children and young people is given the highest priority throughout the school. All staff contribute to providing a caring, safe and nurturing learning environment. Tasks, activities and resources in classes are well matched to meet the needs of most children and young people. Almost all lessons are designed to build on prior learning. In the best lessons, children and young people are motivated by active learning opportunities which are challenging. Staff should ensure that all learning activities are consistently delivered at a brisk pace. Children demonstrate strong self-confidence and are keen to engage in discussions about themselves and school life. They are given opportunities to influence school improvement through participation in the pupil council and in surveys and questionnaires. There are examples of the pupil council representing children's views effectively and these being acted upon, especially in relation to playground development and new facilities, such as a water cooler being installed. The school now needs to consider how it can develop further the involvement of all children and young people as leaders, and in having a say about how to improve their learning.

Across the nursery and school, staff use a range of methods to monitor and evaluate their work. Staff should develop further their approaches to monitoring, tracking and setting clear targets for progressing learning. The school will benefit from developing a more data rich understanding of all academic performance to help support and challenge staff and learners better to continue to improve. This will support young people to understand better what they need to do to reach the next level, and to achieve as well as possible. This will also allow parents to be better involved in supporting children and young people to achieve. Almost all children and young people requiring additional support receive this within classroom settings and are made to feel fully included in their class group at all times. Support for learning staff also provide individual and small group sessions for children requiring extra support, for example, with the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. Staff with responsibility for pastoral care and guidance take positive steps to identify and address issues such as health problems, family circumstances or social and emotional issues which may affect children and young people's learning.

At all stages, children and young people have very positive attitudes to learning and they are very proud of their school. Staff in the nursery use floor books effectively as a way of recording evidence of learning. Children are aware of the purpose of floor books and are fully involved in documenting their achievements. They are confident in discussing their progress in learning. In the junior school almost all teachers are adopting a range of creative learning and teaching strategies to help motivate and engage children. Almost all children are keen to learn, and answer questions enthusiastically offering their views and opinions with confidence. In almost all lessons observed in the senior school, learning and teaching is well structured. Almost all young people are comfortable to approach their teachers for help, and teachers respond immediately to their requests for assistance. At S4 to S6, young people's attainment in national qualifications is strong. They achieve success in moving to a positive destination after leaving school. Young people are challenged to use higher order thinking skills such as thinking for themselves, debating, discussing and problem solving. This could be extended further to develop learners more as independent thinkers. Across the school, young people are achieving a broad range of skills very well, including important skills for life and work through their participation in valuable charity work, and sports events. Young people are gaining Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and at S1 and S2 learners achieve a John Muir Award. Educational residential trips provide challenging contexts for young people to develop as individuals and work in teams with others. Young people gain skills in performance through their engagement in a very wide range of music and drama public performances such as "Bugsy Malone" which learners are rehearsing presently.

Curriculum provision across the school is strong. In the nursery, staff develop the curriculum through making good use of the local community, volunteers and visitors to enrich children's learning experiences. In the primary the curriculum is enhanced by specialist teaching staff, providing opportunities in science, art and design, drama, music, physical education and modern languages. The senior school provides a broad curriculum with well-considered progression routes for young people across different subject areas. There is a good range of national qualifications in the senior school including opportunities for young people to study Advanced Highers. The headmaster is an effective leader who is well respected by learners, staff and parents. He is actively involved in reviewing practice across the school community". Under his

leadership the school is continuing to improve. He sets high expectations around learners working hard and showing care and kindness to one another. The senior management team have a range of complementary skills and use these well to provide high quality leadership. As a result, staff collaborate well together. The headmaster works well with the board of governors who support and challenge the school appropriately. Together they have a clear vision to take the school forward.

We are confident the school has the necessary arrangements and procedures in place to ensure continued improvement in the quality of education provided. The school and board of governors will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the progress of the school.

Aileen Monaghan
HM Inspector

Additional evidence for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/CliftonHallSchoolEdinburghCity.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.