

26 November 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Smithycroft Secondary School
Glasgow City Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well young people are learning and achieving and how well the school supports 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 preparing young people for the world of work; supporting vulnerable young people and helping all young people obtain a clear picture of their own progress. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving young people's education.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

Almost all young people are well-behaved, respectful and attentive. They are keen to do well and remain on task without close supervision. They are treated with fairness and respect and are confident that staff offer them appropriate support and guidance to do well. Young people support each other effectively in their learning and sustain their attention well to complete given tasks. They communicate very well with one another in group tasks and are skilled in evaluating their own and their partner's progress. Young people display a hardworking and positive attitude to learning in classes across departments. In the senior stages, they benefit from very good oral feedback from staff which supports them in being clear about what they need to do to improve. Staff are now working to ensure that young people from S1 to S3 benefit consistently from similar high-quality feedback.

Young people in Smithycroft Secondary School achieve very well. They are developing their skills very effectively across an impressively rich range of contexts which includes leadership, sport, culture, citizenship, creativity, charitable causes and outdoor learning activities. Achievements are well recognised through newsletters, displays, announcements, assemblies and award ceremonies. The school operates an annual programme of reward trips related to improved attendance and the school's merit award scheme. Over the last few years, groups of young people have widened their horizons and developed their cultural awareness by participating in trips to a number of countries across Europe. The school is in the process of establishing links with other schools internationally to extend further young people's international awareness. By the end of S3, most young people are making appropriate progress in literacy and numeracy. In S4 and S5, the school has had notable success in

improving young people's attainment in national examinations. At these stages, young people's performance is better than in other schools serving young people with similar needs and from similar backgrounds in a number of key national measures. Young people with additional support needs and those attending the Young Parents' Support Base attain very well. Overall, the proportion of all young people securing a positive destination on leaving school has been higher than both the Glasgow and national averages in three of the last four years.

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

Staff are very sensitive to the individual needs of young people, including those with additional support needs. In almost all lessons, tasks, activities and resources engage young people well and challenge them to do their best. In almost all lessons, teachers ensure that learning is progressed at an appropriately brisk pace. In a small number of lessons, too much time is taken up with teachers' explanations and this reduces time for quality learning. The school has a well-developed system for identifying the needs of young people. All staff have appropriate information about children with additional support needs and are updated regularly with suggested strategies to meet their needs. Key staff provide very effective consultancy support for class teachers. High-quality partnership working with a range of partners including Junction 12 and the education liaison officer has impacted positively on young people's attendance, self-esteem and ability to make friends. Other partners, including a trained counsellor, provide support for more vulnerable young people with mental, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to very good effect. There is scope to involve support for learning staff more directly in supporting children when they move from primary school to Smithycroft. This will ensure young people benefit from the specialist support they need and are able to make the best progress. We have asked the school to consider how to involve more staff in providing the specialist support that is required for a large number of young people. The work of the Young Parents' Support base is very impressive in supporting young mothers from across Glasgow including those at Smithycroft. The team links well with school staff to support mothers to remain engaged with education and to secure a positive destination on leaving school.

The curriculum supports young people very well to follow their own pathway to a positive destination after leaving school. From S1 to S3, teachers aim to equip young people with the necessary skills for learning, life and work. Across S1 and S2, young people study all curricular areas. In S3, they choose from a range of courses which aim to challenge them further in developing their knowledge and skills. Young people's opportunities to link learning across subject boundaries need to be better planned around the expectations of Curriculum for Excellence. There are very effective opportunities for all young people to extend their achievements through award programmes in S1 to S3, including in outdoor learning. Very good allocation of time to physical education from S1 to S4 supports young people's health and wellbeing. We have asked the school to continue to improve how it develops young people's skills in literacy and numeracy. There are major strengths in the curriculum from S4 to S6. The school plans the curriculum at these stages around young people's needs and provides an impressive range of flexible curricular options in highly effective partnership working with other schools, colleges, universities, community groups and business partners. These include vocational options, engineering scholarships and employability skills, transition to work and culinary excellence

programmes. Young people are very well advised on moving from S3 into the senior phase to ensure they follow the most appropriate route. The school needs to continue to improve curricular links with primary schools to better support young people's progress.

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

The headteacher is providing strong leadership and has a clear vision for improvement in the school. All staff are committed to reflecting regularly on their practice and identifying areas for further improvement. They work well together to gather the views of young people about their learning in departments, to take action based on these views and to share best practice. The school can demonstrate how these activities have led to improvements in young people's experiences and achievements over the last few sessions. Many staff are involved in whole-school improvement groups which are leading to improvements across many aspects of the school's work. The school improvement group drives progress with the school improvement plan and ensures that priorities are appropriate and overtaken. The plan is based on a wide range of views from staff, parents, partners and young people as well as information from departmental monitoring activities. The student council is leading work to introduce a new house system in the school. The school has recently introduced a system for tracking young people's progress across S1 to S3 and this needs to be developed further to gauge more clearly how young people are progressing across all curricular areas.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Young people who are respectful and determined to achieve.
- Partnership working, particularly from S4 to S6, to provide a curriculum which meets the needs of young people.
- Relationships and the positive climate for learning where staff and young people take great pride in their school community.
- The willingness of staff to provide additional support and opportunities to achieve beyond the classroom.
- The Young Parents' Support Base.
- Impact of the headteacher's leadership on improving outcomes for young people.

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

- Continue to build young people's confidence in identifying their strengths and next steps in their learning by improving the quality and consistency of feedback about their progress.
- Continue to improve the curriculum to help young people to build on prior learning from primary and further embed approaches to enhancing young people's skills in literacy and numeracy in all subject areas.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are very satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are 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. We will work with the school and Glasgow City Council in order to record the innovative practice and share it more widely.

Donald A Macleod
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.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/Smit-hycroftSecondarySchoolGlasgowCity.asp>

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