13 January 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

Cathkin High School
South Lanarkshire 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 young people’s involvement in their learning and how well their skills are being developed across the curriculum. We also looked at how successful the school’s approaches to raising attainment for all have been. 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?

Young people across the school, including those with complex needs in the Additional Support Needs (ASN) Unit, enjoy learning and are motivated to learn. They benefit from a culture of mutual respect between staff and young people. Young people demonstrate respect for their school through both behaving well and maintaining high standards of dress. The shared campus with Cathkin Community Nursery, Rutherglen High School and an authority Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs Base provides opportunities for young people to widen their learning experiences. For example, young people at S6 develop leadership and citizenship skills through providing classroom support to children in the nursery and young people at Rutherglen High School. Almost all young people feel that they are encouraged by staff to do the best they can. They value the many out-of-hours opportunities for revision and study support which teachers provide for them. As a result, young people are developing confidence in themselves as learners and are making progress in their learning. Although young people know that their views are taken into account, they would like to have more of a say in how they learn as well as what they learn. Young people value one-to-one conversations they have with their teachers and pastoral care staff about their progress. They have opportunities to reflect on their learning further through completion of personal learning plans, profiles or recently-introduced monthly blogs for those at S2. These approaches however need to be developed further to ensure that young people have a clearer idea of their strengths, areas for development and can agree how they are going to improve their learning.
Across all year groups, young people learn new skills and extend their interests and personal achievements through the school’s programme of out-of-class opportunities. This includes a wide range of trips and residential visits. For example, young people have visited the Scottish Parliament to deepen their political understanding and have taken part in international visits to football clubs such as Feyenoord or Villarreal to develop their skills in sport. Young people are achieving across a wide range of sporting and cultural activities. A significant number of young people proudly represent their school in local and national competitions. Through such participation, aspects of their health and wellbeing are improved such as increased self-esteem, resilience and physical health. Young people need to have an increased awareness of the skills that they are developing within the classroom and through out-of-class activities. The school should continue to develop its approaches to recognising young people’s achievements through formal accreditation such as the Young Philanthropy Award achieved by young people at S4 through their religious and moral education studies. The school is developing further its monitoring and tracking of achievement and young people’s progress from S1 to S3 across all subjects. This will better ensure that all young people benefit from the opportunities provided. Most young people with additional support needs are making appropriate progress in their learning. The young people at S4 in the ASN Unit have achieved a number of qualifications, well matched to their needs and abilities. Overall, across S4 to S6, young people’s performance in National Qualifications is improving. There has been a notable improvement in the number of young people achieving at least five awards at National 5 level or equivalent at S4. The school recognises that in recent years boys have performed less well than girls at S4 and has plans to address this. A mentoring programme has been established to increase the number of Highers taken at S5 by young people who achieved highly at S4. The number of young people who leave school and move on to a positive destination such as employment, training and further education has improved in recent years.

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

The school, including the ASN Unit, provides a nurturing environment where most young people feel safe and well cared for. Across the school, teachers need to take steps to ensure tasks, activities and resources are planned to meet the differing needs of all learners within classes. The pace of the learning could be brisker in lessons if young people were given more opportunity to move through tasks at their own pace. The support for learning department has successfully delivered a range of programmes which have developed the literacy skills of a targeted group of young people. Young people with complex needs are well supported during individual and group activities in the ASN Unit. These young people would benefit from additional support in mainstream classes and improved planning by teachers to meet their needs fully. This would provide them with more opportunities to benefit from working with their peers. Young people who require help with their learning have additional support plans with learning targets to support their progress. Staff regularly review these plans in partnership with parents, young people and, where appropriate, partner agencies. Parents value this involvement and feel that it supports them in helping their children to achieve as highly as possible. School staff work well with partners including educational psychology, Home Link and Active Breaks to provide strong support for young people to improve attendance, motivation and to prepare them for life beyond school.
The school is continuing to develop its curriculum to reflect national advice relating to Curriculum for Excellence. It is doing so through consultation with parents, young people and staff. The school recognises that the current arrangement of young people making subject choices at the end of S1 does not ensure that all experience their entitlement to a broad general education and has plans to address this. Staff should continue to develop approaches to interdisciplinary learning so that young people can make connections between different areas of their learning. The start that the school has made in this aspect of learning includes the ‘Hurricane in Honduras’ project for pupils in S2 which culminates in a day of outdoor learning, developing young people’s team-working and problem-solving skills. Staff across the school are planning the development of young people’s literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. However, there is more work to be done to ensure that these aspects of learning are developed at an appropriate level and in a coherent way across the school. The school successfully provides a curriculum matched to the individual needs of young people who wish to follow a more vocational pathway. This includes work experience, college courses at S4, Count Us In and Ready for Work programmes which support young people to move on to employment training or further education. The school should continue to improve the variety and levels of courses and programmes on offer to cater for young people’s needs and interests from S4 to S6. Currently young people at S5 and S6 are not receiving their entitlement to religious and moral education. A few subject departments such as English, modern languages and mathematics have developed links with primary schools to try to ensure that children can build on their previous learning when they enter S1. We have asked the school to develop such links more widely across all subjects.

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

There is a strong sense of community across Cathkin High School. Staff are committed to improving life chances for all young people. Many readily give of their own time to provide opportunities for young people to achieve and broaden their perspective. Staff participate or take the lead in a range of working groups or committees helping to improve the school. The school has a range of approaches for evaluating the quality of its work. This includes the use of surveys, reviewing examination results with individual departments and classroom visits by senior and middle managers to observe learning. Departments reflect on evidence gathered and identify their strengths and areas for improvement. We have asked the school to extend the sharing of good practice across the school to ensure a more consistently high-quality learning experience for young people. Staff recognise the need to develop and implement a more effective system for monitoring and tracking young people’s progress to help improve attainment further. The school seeks out the views of young people, parents and staff and takes account of them when making decisions. There are a range of opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills, particularly at the upper stages. There is scope for the pupil forum to play a more significant role in school improvement. The school is supported very well by the Parent Council. For example, it worked closely with the school in developing additional study programmes which are much valued by young people. In her time in post, the headteacher has been effective in leading improvements in ethos, culture and aspects of attainment and the school has improved its standing within the local community. She has managed the school successfully during some
periods of significant change such as the move to a new building. She identifies areas for improvement and should now prioritise these further to focus attention and resources on those which will make the biggest difference to providing positive outcomes for young people. Depute headteachers are also committed to school improvement and they provide a strong and valued link with their associated departments. All bring individual strengths to the senior management team (SMT). The SMT need to ensure that they develop further a shared approach to leadership and bringing about improvements in the school. With support from South Lanarkshire Council, the school has the capacity to improve further.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Confident young people who are motivated to achieve well.
- Partnerships, including those with parents, which extend opportunities for achievement.
- The commitment of staff to improving young people’s life chances.
- The sense of community and belonging across the school and the headteacher’s role in developing a more positive school ethos and culture.

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

- Ensure young people experience consistently high-quality learning across the school.
- Continue to develop the curriculum, in particular from S4 to S6, to increase the range of courses and opportunities for young people to achieve.
- Continue to develop approaches to tracking and monitoring young people’s progress to ensure that they can build on their prior learning and achievements.
- Improve the consistency of direction from the senior management team across departments to secure continuous improvement.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that most of the school’s self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will maintain contact with the South Lanarkshire Council to monitor progress at the school. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.

Marie McAdam
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/CathkinHighSchoolSouthLanarkshire.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.