Castlebrae Community High School
The City of Edinburgh Council
15 March 2011

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents[1], 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

Castlebrae Community High School is a non-denominational school which serves the Craigmillar, Niddrie and Newcraighall areas of Edinburgh. The roll was 241 when the inspection was carried out in January 2011. Young people's attendance was below the national average in 2008/2009. The headteacher had been acting head for some 12 months prior to his permanent appointment in December 2010.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The effectiveness of learning and teaching in particular subject areas within the school.
- The range of well-planned programmes of vocational education.
- Young people's responsiveness to opportunities to show qualities of enterprise and service to others.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Young people are progressing well in their personal and social development. At particular stages, a few young people gain important skills for work, for example in running a lunchtime café. However, young people of all ages need more opportunities to take such responsibility. The majority feel treated with respect, and enjoy learning. They learn best where they can do so actively and independently in groups or as individuals. They need to do this more regularly across all areas of their learning. Overall, young people need a clearer understanding of what they have done well, and what they need to do to improve further. For all young people, teachers need to plan learning experiences of consistently high quality, building on existing effective practice within the school.

When given opportunities to do so, young people achieve well in activities focused on vocational learning, environmental education and charitable work. The Eco group have achieved Eco-Schools Scotland silver award, a Biodiversity Award, and a British Gas Solar Panel award. A few individuals and groups achieve in sport and personal development, such as Junior Sports Leader and The Duke of Edinburgh's Awards. The 'Young Philanthropists' have developed

skills in arguing the case for charitable funding on behalf of others. Young people achieve well in a range of enterprise activities that develop their understanding of the creation and design of business products. Overall, however, the school needs to develop its knowledge and recognition of what its young people achieve in activities within and beyond school.

Across the school, the majority of young people, including those with additional needs, are not making enough progress in their learning. By the end of S2, fewer than half achieved national levels in reading writing or mathematics in recent years. In reading and writing there is an improving trend. In expressive arts and craft design and technology (CDT) young people are making suitable progress, and attain well. The school does not track well enough young people's progress in other areas of their learning. From S4 to S6 young people's attainment in national examinations is well below national averages in almost all measures. Young people perform notably less well than in schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. In recent years, an increasing proportion of young people progress to further study or employment on leaving school.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The curriculum is broad, with a well-planned range of vocational opportunities from S3. These offer young people increasingly effective pathways to develop their skills for work. However, some changes to the curriculum have not been so well planned. This has at times restricted young people's choices and their ability to make progress in learning in some subjects. The quality of some courses and programmes within particular subjects is not consistently high enough. Teachers urgently need to improve such courses and programmes to help young people make better progress in learning within *Curriculum for Excellence.* Well-planned programmes in a few subjects help young people progress well in their learning from P7 to S1 within the 'Smooth Moves' initiative. Teachers need to ensure young people are similarly well supported across all areas of their learning. Arrangements to support young people in moving from school to work

or further education are well planned. The school is actively planning to provide opportunities for all young people to experience two hours of high-quality physical education.

Across the school, staff know young people well. Learning Support staff play an important role in helping young people develop their reading skills through *Reading Recovery.* They now need to review further the range of ways they support young people with additional needs, to ensure that support is consistently effective. In a few classes tasks and activities are well matched to young people's learning needs. The quality of homework is too variable across the school. Overall, teachers need to provide tasks and activities that help all young people make better progress in their learning. The school recognises the need for further work to improve attendance and reduce exclusion.

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

Staff work closely with a range of partners from other agencies and the business community to support young people's learning. With the advice of the speech and language therapist they have put in place new ways to help young people increase their vocabulary. Thanks to effective partnerships with national and local businesses and further education young people develop increasingly impressive technical, creative and enterprise skills. The Parent Council is supportive of the school and is keen to help parents become more fully involved as partners in their child's learning. There is scope to develop further partnership within the local learning community.

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

Staff and young people are active in a range of ways in improving the school. A majority of young people feel they have a say in making the

way they learn in school better, and would like more opportunities to do so. The student council puts forward views on how to improve facilities for young people. At S4 and S5, seniors act as buddies to young people in S1, and continue these roles in their own time and over summer holidays. Many staff offer clubs and activities for young people. Almost all take part in or lead working groups that aim to improve learning and teaching. Overall, however, the school needs to take more accurate account of its effectiveness in improving young people's learning. The school improvement plan lacks important detail about timescales and measures of success.

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

Staff at all levels are keen for all young people to do well. Young people, particularly at S1, are responding well to the school's improved approaches to recognise and promote positive behaviour. Overall, across the school staff need to arrive at more consistent and higher expectations of what all young people can learn and achieve. The school has effective arrangements to ensure young people are safe. It deals well with the small number of complaints it receives. Programmes in personal and social education and other subjects help young people develop their understanding of other cultures and beliefs. The school should improve its arrangements for religious observance. In addition to improving attendance, staff should more consistently challenge young people's late arrival at classes.

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

The headteacher understands well the school's strengths in learning and teaching, and recognises its development needs. He has encouraged and promoted approaches to improving young people's literacy skills. He has supported staff to put in place a system to promote positive behaviour. He has fostered wider opportunities for staff to undertake leadership roles in working groups or sharing good practice. There remains considerable scope, however, to improve

teamwork at all levels to lead change and improvement effectively. Across the school, leadership roles and responsibilities need to be clearer. Leaders at all levels need to ensure consistently that actions for school improvement are carried out on time and to agreed standards. The school should involve young people more as partners in improving the school, building on ways they presently fulfil leadership roles. Staff could undertake innovative practice in planning school improvement jointly with partners.

8. What happens next?

We will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within one year of publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved. Following that visit, we may continue to check the improvements the school has made. We may also carry out a second follow-through inspection within two years of the original inspection report. If a second follow-through inspection visit is necessary then it will result in another report to parents on the extent of improvement that the school has made.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Improve attainment and achievement.
- Provide more coherent and consistent learning and teaching to meet better the needs of all young people.
- More effective use of self-evaluation, together with partners, to improve the school.
- Improve arrangements for religious observance.

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 Castlebrae Community High School.

Improvements in performance	**weak**
Learners' experiences	**satisfactory**
Meeting learning needs	**weak**

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

The curriculum	**satisfactory**
Improvement through self-evaluation	**weak**

HM Inspector: Alistair Kirkwood
15 March 2011

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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