

29 March 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Currie Community High School
The City of Edinburgh 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 learning for sustainability and the Currie Learning Community. 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 experience a learning climate characterised by mutual respect and high-quality care. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Almost all young people are highly motivated and enjoy school. In most lessons young people engage in active learning which deepens their understanding. In most lessons young people work well in pairs and teams to complete collaborative tasks and support each other to achieve. They would benefit from more consistent high-quality oral and written feedback on how to improve their work. Across the school, young people make commendable use of digital technology which enhances their learning. They use a range of software and social media effectively to share resources and learning ideas. Young people provide feedback on their learning experiences which teachers take into account when adapting lesson plans and course material. Almost all young people feel valued and able to influence change within their school but many feel the pupil council could be more influential.

Across all stages, young people participate in residential experiences, field trips and cultural excursions which increase their knowledge and skills in challenging unfamiliar environments. Young people in S1 gained important leadership and teamworking skills through their trip to Dalguise. Older young people gained significant cultural and historical insights through exploring the battlefields of Europe or visits to Paris, Berlin and Auschwitz. Young people demonstrate strong understanding of equalities and inclusion which is promoted through the school values. Diversity within the school community is acknowledged and celebrated. Building on young people's success in awards such as sports leader, dance leader, CREST and Go4Set awards for science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) projects, the school has begun to increase opportunities for young people to achieve accreditation for some of their learning

beyond the classroom. This includes through the recently introduced John Muir Trust award for outdoor learning. Young people's participation in sport and other out-of-class learning is high. Senior staff are aware of the need to build a better overview of the totality of young people's achievements to ensure all young people benefit from what is on offer in school and within the wider community.

The school's attainment data indicates that most young people make very good progress in their broad general education from S1 to S3. Over recent years young people's attainment in reading and writing has significantly improved and there has been a slight improvement in mathematics attainment. Young people demonstrate a sound grasp of many aspects of health and wellbeing and are developing well as global citizens. They have an increasing appreciation of where their food comes from through investigating wild and locally grown produce, and enhanced awareness of ethical and sustainable food. They are well informed about the dangers of the internet, how to protect themselves online and how to avoid conflict in peer groups through appropriate use of social media. Staff have strengthened their approaches to tracking and monitoring young people's progress across all subjects through professional learning and shared moderation activities to ensure their judgements are robust. They should continue to build on this to achieve high levels of consistency in tracking, monitoring and reporting across all faculties. The majority of young people stay on at school until S6. Almost all school leavers achieve a positive destination. From S4 to S6 young people generally attain as well as young people with similar needs and backgrounds in other schools across Scotland. However rather than consistent year on year improvement, the school's attainment fluctuates. Whilst a few young people each year achieve very highly and young people with additional support needs do well, there remains scope to increase attainment in most subjects. A key priority is the need to increase attainment in numeracy through a more coherent and consistent approach to embedding numeracy across the curriculum.

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

The majority of teachers plan learning which meets the needs of most young people in their classes. In a few subjects tasks, activities and resources are differentiated very well and ensure all young people are appropriately challenged by their learning. There is a need to extend this practice across the school and to ensure young people consistently engage in learning which is brisk in pace. The combined experience, commitment and enthusiasm of the specialist support team ensures that young people receive appropriate advice and support to make good progress in their learning and personal development. The team makes effective use of tracking and monitoring data to ensure interventions are timely, well-managed and provide the right level of additional support for those who need it. Effective communication with pupils, parents, staff across the school and partners provides a strong foundation for shared strategies which ensure young people's additional support needs are met.

The school has developed a curriculum which provides good breadth and balance for all young people from S1 to S3. Commendably, curriculum developments are underpinned by the school's clearly articulated vision for learning for sustainability, increasing STEM skills and building broader skills for learning, life and work such as leadership and collaborative learning. Each of these aspects is a significant feature of courses and programmes across the school. The school now needs to focus on

ensuring coherence and progression in these areas as young people move from S1 through to S6. Partnership working with cluster primary schools supports young people to make a smooth transition from P7 to S1. Staff across the cluster increasingly work together to develop shared expectations and plan learning for example in science, modern languages, literacy and numeracy. In consultation with parents and young people, the school is working towards a new curriculum design for young people in S4 to S6 which should enable more flexible learning pathways and learning with partners beyond the school. All young people have opportunities for progression and depth through national qualifications to Higher and Advanced Higher. For example a few young people in S5 have started on a creative industries course leading to higher national certificate (HNC) through the South East Scotland Academies programme. A partnership approach with Edinburgh College and Queen Margaret University is providing another group of young people the opportunity to develop a range of industry related skills including media communication, visual design and performance. Improved careers education, mentoring and work experience is supporting young people to be better prepared for the world of work and improving post-school transitions.

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

Working together through the Currie Learning Community all staff contribute to improvements in teaching and learning across the school. Most staff can identify improvements in their practice as a result of the whole school drive to ensure young people are actively engaged and take responsibility for their learning and achievements. A renewed vision and direction for the school has firmly established a positive ethos and inclusive environment where staff and young people feel respected and valued. Attendance has improved and is consistently above the national average. The headteacher places strong value in distributing leadership to staff at all levels and in developing leadership by young people. She regularly seeks staff and pupil views and takes account of them when setting improvement priorities. She provides strong leadership by promoting a collegiate approach within the senior leadership team and across the school. Parents and partners are positive about their engagement with the school but they would like to be able to contribute more fully to self-evaluation and setting school improvement priorities. The headteacher is keen to take this on board. As a result, the school is well-placed to take forward the aspects for development identified by this inspection and to continue moving from strength to strength.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Motivated, responsible young people who support each other well and contribute to improving their school.
- High quality support for young people with additional support needs.
- A strong collegiate culture and many staff who take on leadership roles.
- Successful approaches to education about equalities and diversity.
- The headteacher's leadership of change which has set a renewed vision, values and direction for the school.

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

- Further improve tracking, monitoring and staff skills to analyse and interrogate data to raise attainment.
- Ensure all teachers plan learning which is appropriately differentiated to meet the needs of all learners.
- Ensure self-evaluation includes increased engagement with parents and partners who contribute to the life and work of the school.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are 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 visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, The City of Edinburgh Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Patricia Watson
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/CurrieHighSchoolEdinburghCity.asp>

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