



**Boclair Academy
Bearsden
East Dunbartonshire
Council
17 March 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school. We describe how young people benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the school does this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents¹ and services which support young people. We also comment on how well staff and young people work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well young people are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally, we comment on the school’s aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the school’s success in achieving these 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 and details about young people’s examination performance. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school and 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

Boclair Academy is a non-denominational school which serves south Bearsden and the village of Torrance. The inspection was carried out in January 2009 at which time the roll was 926. Young people's attendance was above the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Positive relationships between staff and young people.
- The enthusiastic, well-motivated and friendly young people.
- High-quality learning and teaching in some departments.
- Consistently high attainment in national examinations.
- Effective partnership working to support young people with additional support needs.
- Effective pastoral support for young people moving from primary school into S1, particularly for those most likely to find the move difficult.

3. Examples of good practice

- Art and design and *Curriculum for Excellence*

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Almost all young people are motivated to learn. They take part enthusiastically and effectively in discussions and group activities. Most teachers provide well-planned activities which help young people develop informed opinions and enable them to express their views confidently. Teachers encourage young people to think creatively and

work independently in a number of subject areas. Most teachers are increasingly setting learning targets and providing constructive feedback to help young people improve their learning. These approaches need to be further developed and adopted more widely across the school.

Staff provide a wide range of out-of-class activities which broaden young people's achievement. By improving the way staff monitor young people's involvement in these important learning opportunities, the school should seek to increase their reach so that more young people can benefit. Many young people gain confidence and improve their self-esteem through their involvement in an increasing number of sporting, musical and cultural activities. For example, over 200 young people contribute to the successful musical-theatre productions each year. Young people in S6 develop communication skills and responsibility by taking part in activities such as the Mark Scott leadership group and helping disabled children with their horse-riding skills. Most young people develop their citizenship skills through taking part in a range of fundraising activities, whilst a few do so by working on environmental projects through Eco-Schools Scotland.

Almost all young people in S1/S2 achieve appropriate levels in mathematics, reading, writing, talking and listening. They are progressing well in classwork across the rest of the curriculum. In the last two years, almost all in S3 Standard Grade English and most in S3 Standard Grade mathematics gained at least general awards after starting courses in S2. Overall, results in national examinations for young people in S4 to S6 have been consistently above or well above the national average. The school has consistently performed better or much better than schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. Young people with additional support needs are making good progress. Almost all young people move on to university, college or employment.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In S1/S2, young people study a suitably wide range of subjects. Staff

have recognised and are beginning to address the need to build more fully on young people's prior learning as they enter S1. From S3 onwards, young people follow a wide range of courses which allow them to progress in their learning. Some young people benefit by following vocational courses at college such as hairdressing and construction. The school should develop more links with community partners to ensure more young people can broaden their achievements and have these recognised. The school's plans to improve provision for physical education at S5/S6 have yet to be implemented due to staffing issues. As part of *Curriculum for Excellence*, teachers have started to look at how young people's literacy and numeracy skills are developed across the curriculum.

The pupil support team provides high-quality support. Teachers value the helpful advice they are given by specialists. A few teachers now need to use this advice more directly to improve the way they meet young people's needs. For example, they need to match activities and resources better to the level of challenge or support needed. Many teachers use information and communications technology (ICT) well to make lessons interesting but these facilities are not available to all teachers. Teachers use effective approaches to identify young people who need additional support. The multi-agency pupil support group is effectively supporting vulnerable young people. Staff need to involve parents and the young people themselves more in planning how to meet their particular learning needs. Individual plans for young people need to be clearer about what they need to do to improve their learning.

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

To provide effective support for young people, the school is working with a range of partners including the social work team, community police, the school nurse and the psychological service. Partner agencies are involved in the effective delivery of the personal and social education (PSE) programme. A counsellor visits the school

twice a week to provide support as needed. The school has very positive relationships with its Parent Council. It makes important contributions to the life of the school such as recently introducing a competition to develop young people's citizenship skills in S1 through liaison with a local residents' association. Most parents are happy with the school and the majority feel that they are kept well informed about the progress made by their child.

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

Although the pupil council consults young people regularly, only a third feel that it is effective at improving the school. Young people would like more of a say in improving the school, particularly about how they learn. Staff are committed to the life and work of the school. They provide a valued lunchtime and after-school supported study programme and many out-of-class clubs and activities. Most teachers are committed to improvement and take part in a range of activities to develop their skills. Just over half contribute to school improvement groups. Across the school, teachers make very good use of examination results to help make improvements to courses and programmes. School managers use a range of approaches to evaluate the work of the school. They evaluate the quality of learning and teaching and monitor young people's progress. However, this needs to be more systematic across the school to ensure improvements in learning.

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

Young people respond well to their teachers' high expectations of behaviour, attendance and learning. Most feel that their teachers encourage them to work to the best of their ability. Relationships between young people and almost all teachers are very positive. Most young people feel safe and cared for in the school and that they are treated fairly and with respect. The school has some effective

approaches to recognise and celebrate achievement in S1/S2, but these approaches are less well developed for young people in S3 to S6. Overall, staff use effective approaches to deal with bullying. They encourage young people to live healthily. Staff need to improve the way young people learn about equality and fairness across the curriculum, and particularly through the programme for PSE. The school's arrangements for religious observance are appropriate. Senior managers need to ensure that young people, parents and members of the community have confidence in its arrangements for handling and resolving complaints.

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

The headteacher and his senior management are very committed to ensuring strong performance in national examinations and to the care and welfare of young people. They provide effective support and advice to subject teachers to ensure strong performance is sustained and improved. This good practice needs to be applied to other areas of school life to improve learners' experiences. They now need to improve the way good practice is shared by teachers across the school. Leadership opportunities are provided for young people and staff, including leading working groups or organising events. Such opportunities now need to be extended to more young people and to all staff. The school is adjusting to considerable recent staff changes and is preparing for *Curriculum for Excellence*. To help it through this change, the whole school community now needs to be involved in clarifying a new vision, aims and values for the school.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education. We have agreed the

following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Continue to improve learning and teaching by better sharing of good practice and through more effective self-evaluation.
- Continue to improve achievement by building more effectively on young people's learning at primary school and through better links with community partners.

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 Boclair Academy.

Improvements in performance	very good
Learners' experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	good

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Marie McAdam
17 March 2009

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This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

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