

**REPORT TO:** SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 17 MARCH 2010  
**REPORT ON:** HMIE INSPECTION ST JOHN'S HIGH SCHOOL  
**REPORT BY:** DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
**REPORT NO:** 170-2010

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

**1.1** The purpose of this report is to report on the findings of the HMIE Inspection of St John's High School.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1** It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- i) notes the contents of this report; and
- ii) instructs the Director of Education to monitor progress towards meeting the areas for improvement contained in the report

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**3.1** None

## **4.0 MAIN TEXT**

**4.1** The school was inspected in November 2009 as a part of HMIE's standard planned inspection pattern. The roll was 880 when the inspection was carried out. The school has enhanced provision for a small number of young people with more complex support needs drawn from across the city. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

**4.2** HMIE identified the following key strengths of the school:

- The strong caring Catholic ethos.
- High-quality support for vulnerable young people.
- Strong partnerships which are extending young people's learning and achievements.
- Polite young people who have a sense of pride in their school.

**4.3** The following areas for improvement were agreed with the school and education authority:

- Leadership across the school as staff implement *Curriculum for Excellence*.

- Self-evaluation which leads to better learning and achievement for all young people.
- More effective planning by teachers to provide more appropriate tasks and activities which meet the needs of all learners.

#### 4.4 Quality Indicators

##### 4.4.1 HMIE reports use a six-point scale for reporting performance:

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

##### 4.4.2 The following quality indicators from "How Good Is Our School 3" (HGIOS 3) were evaluated:

Quality Indicator	Level
Improvements in performance	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Learners' experiences	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Meeting learning needs	<b>Satisfactory</b>
The curriculum	<b>Good</b>
Improvement through self-evaluation	<b>Weak</b>

4.5 The School Improvement Plan (2009-2012) includes a focus on these areas for improvement. These will be regularly reviewed, monitored and evaluated in line with both the school and authority quality improvement calendar.

4.6 HMIE have indicated that they are confident the school, with support from the Education Authority will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a consequence, they will make no more visits to the school following this inspection. The District Inspector will maintain contact with the Education Authority to monitor improvements in learner's achievement.

#### 5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has been screened for any implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environment Assessment, Anti-Poverty and Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

5.2 There are no major issues.

**6.0 CONSULTATION**

6.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and Director of Finance.

**7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 The following Background Papers were relied upon in preparation of this Report: HMIE Report: St John's High School, Dundee City Council, 19 January 2010.

JIM COLLINS  
Director of Education

JC/PC/LB  
March 2010

## **St John's High School Dundee City Council**

**19 January 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents<sup>1</sup>, 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](http://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, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school and a report on the learning community surrounding the school.

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## 1. The school

St John's High School is a denominational school which serves the west and central areas of the city of Dundee. The roll was 880 when the inspection was carried out in November 2009. The school has enhanced provision for a small number of young people with more complex support needs drawn from across the city. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

## 2. Particular strengths of the school

- The strong caring Catholic ethos.
- High-quality support for vulnerable young people.
- Strong partnerships which are extending young people's learning and achievements.
- Polite young people who have a sense of pride in their school.

## 3. Example of good practice

- Impact of the 'Community Enterprise Project' on young people's achievement.

## 4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

### Learning and achievement

Most young people are well behaved and keen to learn. Increasingly, they are taking on more responsibility for their own learning, for example through the use of learning logs. Young people in S1 are developing a better understanding of how they learn through the *Learning to Learn* project. In a number of subjects, teachers successfully engage young people actively in their learning. This good practice is not consistent enough across the school. Young people are not always clear about their strengths as learners and how they can improve their work. They do not have enough opportunities to develop the skills they need to become independent learners.

Many young people are developing skills and achieving well in community projects and in activities both within and beyond class. Many of these activities are run jointly by school staff and local partners. Young people develop confidence and creative skills through taking part in performances, for example in the recent 'Homecoming' production. Senior students show high levels of responsibility as peer supporters, prefects, school captains and members of the 'Respect' group. A number of young people in S5/S6 are achieving success through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Staff should extend opportunities for young people across the school to develop their leadership skills. The school is a caring community, built on strong Catholic values and promotes citizenship skills well. Young people raise funds for a number of local, national and international charities. The school is supporting a community

in Uganda. Young people with additional needs achieve well with support, for example gaining certificates through 'Dynamic Youth' and the John Muir Award for community service. The school is aware of the need to plan, track and record young people's achievements more effectively to ensure that they all benefit from the opportunities available.

By the end of S2, the majority of young people achieve national levels in reading and mathematics and a good number exceed them. Attainment in writing has declined, with less than half achieving national levels. At S1/S2, the school does not track young people's progress across other subject areas closely enough to show improvement. Most of the small number of young people with more complex needs are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and writing. At S4 to S6, overall results in national examinations have been variable in recent years. They are mostly below national averages. In a few subjects, there is an improving pattern of performance. The proportion of young people achieving five or more Highers by the end of S6 has also improved. However, a notable number of young people at S5/S6 do not achieve an overall award in one or more of the subjects they have studied. Too many young people do not achieve minimum standards in English and mathematics by the end of S4. The school is taking action to address this issue. On leaving school, most young people move on to higher or further education, training or employment. The proportion has improved steadily over the last three years and is above the national average.

### **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

At all stages, a good range of courses and programmes enable young people to progress well in their learning. A carefully planned religious and moral education programme, liturgical events and regular religious services help them develop their faith. Young people in S1/S2 have two hours of high-quality physical education each week, but not those in S3 to S6. Staff work with a range of partners to put in place programmes to meet the needs of more vulnerable young people requiring additional support. For example, young people are increasing their fitness levels and developing skills for life by working with the Disability Sports Team. Dundee College, Ancrum Outdoor Centre, Grey Lodge and Fairbridge also provide individual programmes for a number of young people. Staff need to monitor and evaluate these programmes and approaches closely to ensure that young people gain sufficient benefit from them and do not miss other important educational experiences. Staff have started to engage more actively with *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are currently looking at ways to develop literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing more effectively across all areas of young people's learning. Staff are helping young people make more connections in their learning through recently introduced community enterprise projects like the 'Homecoming'.

Across the school, staff do not always plan effectively enough to ensure that all young people progress as well as possible. At S1/S2 in particular, tasks and activities are too often the same for all young people in the class. This can mean they are too difficult for some and not challenging enough for others. Homework is not used consistently across the school to support and extend young people's learning. Young people with additional needs are well supported as they transfer from primary through into secondary school. Staff work together successfully to identify, plan and meet their individual needs. Specialist support for learning teachers and assistants help these young people access appropriate courses and make good progress. They work well with them in class and through individual and small group tuition. They provide subject teachers with helpful information and advice on appropriate strategies to meet their needs.

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

Parents' evenings and reports provide helpful information on young people's progress. The school responds effectively to any complaints or concerns raised by parents. The active Parent Council supports the school well. It is a useful forum for discussion, for example about the building refurbishment and the religious life of the school. Almost all parents are happy with the school. However, less than half of them feel that the school asks for, or takes account of their views. The school needs to involve all parents more effectively in evaluating the life and work of the school. Staff work closely with the chaplain and the local diocese to foster the Catholic ethos and provide regular opportunities for young people to practice their faith. They work effectively with a range of agencies including the bilingual support service, social work services, speech therapy and other local health services. Staff from leisure and community services and local businesses provide invaluable help and support to young people in enterprise projects. These community partners also support after-school clubs and health-promoting activities.

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

Young people participate well in the life of the school and are very positive about the opportunities they have. The pupil council has a say in some decisions, for example about school refurbishment and support for charities. Just over half of young people feel the school council is effective in improving the school. They would like to have a greater say in improving learning. The school does not gather or take account of young people's views in a regular and systematic way. Staff take part in a range of approaches to evaluate the work of the school. They analyse results in national examinations, review programmes of work and discuss new approaches to learning and other whole-school projects. However, only just over half of staff feel they have a real say in agreeing areas for improvement. Teachers are encouraged to improve their practice in the classroom but, improvements in practice are not monitored or evaluated systematically or regularly. As a result, new and more effective approaches to learning have not been consistently applied. Overall, approaches to evaluating the quality of education are not robust enough and do not involve all staff, young people, parents and partners. They do not have sufficient impact on improving learning and achievement.

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

Staff provide strong pastoral care and are fully aware of their responsibilities to protect young people. Young people are encouraged to live healthy lives through classwork and projects like the weekly drop-in session run by the school nurse and community support workers. The school recently achieved a silver award for health promotion from the local council. Most young people are happy at school and think that staff deal effectively with bullying. Most feel they are treated fairly and with respect. Young people with more complex needs are included well in the life of the school. Although most staff have high expectations of young people's behaviour, low level disruption disturbs learning in a few classes. Staff celebrate young people's successes well but their expectations of what they can achieve are not always high enough. The school needs to do more to address late coming and its impact on learning.

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

The headteacher is highly committed to the school and its young people and has worked hard to establish a strong caring Catholic ethos. He is well supported in this by his hard working senior management colleagues. Together they now need to focus on providing a clearer sense of direction for the school. All staff need to take on more responsibility for improving the school, so that young people learn more effectively and achieve more highly. In rising to the challenges of implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*, all staff and young people need to be actively involved in leading the school forward.

## 9. What happens next?

We are confident that, with support from the education authority, 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. Our District Inspector will maintain contact with the education authority to monitor improvements in learners' achievement.

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

- Leadership across the school as staff implement *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Self-evaluation which leads to better learning and achievement for all young people.
- More effective planning by teachers to provide more appropriate tasks and activities which meet the needs of all learners.

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 St John's High School.

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>

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

<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>weak</b>

**HM Inspector:** Mairi Timmons

19 January 2010

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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## Footnotes

1. Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.