



**Forrester High School
The City of Edinburgh
Council
5 May 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

Forrester High School is a non-denominational school which serves the southwest area of the city of Edinburgh. The roll was 631 when the inspection was carried out in February 2009. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008. At the time of the inspection, work had started on a new school building. This had temporarily reduced young people's access to facilities for sport, leisure and recreation within the school grounds.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Staff commitment to meeting the learning needs of young people.
- Positive relationships between staff and young people.
- Inclusion of young people with additional support needs.

3. Example of good practice

- Creating an audit tool for Science.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the school, young people enjoy positive, respectful relationships with each other and with staff. Almost all young people behave appropriately and contribute well to lessons. They find many of their lessons exciting and motivating, but this varies across the school. Young people do not always know what they are expected to achieve or what they need to do to improve their work. They would benefit from more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Most teachers make good use of discussion and questioning to confirm learning and encourage young people's thinking. Almost all young people feel that their teachers treat them fairly, encourage them to do their best and help them to develop confidence.

Many young people broaden their learning and achieve success through varied out-of-class activities. They contribute to school life and increase their self-esteem through involvement in sporting and musical events. Young people increase their knowledge and

enjoyment of the performing arts through regular theatre trips. Charitable work is a strong feature of school life which helps to develop their sense of responsibility for others. They all gain skills in teamwork and facing up to new challenges during the annual alternative timetable week. Increasing numbers experience success through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the John Muir Trust. The school recognises the need to improve leadership skills for all young people and to find ways of increasing achievement, maximising potential for all.

Young people are progressing well in their learning. The majority achieve appropriate levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of S2. Almost all gain national qualifications by the end of S3. The school has taken steps to improve young people's achievement in English and mathematics. Overall, by the end of S4, young people's attainment is much better than in other schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. The attainment of young people in S5 and S6 has improved recently. The proportion gaining five or more Higher awards by the end of S6 is increasing. However, overall at this stage, results are less good than in schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. The school should continue to focus on reducing the high number of young people who do not achieve awards in a few subjects. The school has started to consider ways to monitor young people's progress from S4 to S6 more closely to ensure they all make appropriate progress and achieve success. Most who leave school at the end of S4 enter employment, further education or training successfully, and the proportion who go on to university from S6 has increased significantly in recent years.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Young people in S1 follow a broad and balanced curriculum which builds well on their prior learning. At S2/S3, almost all study eight Standard Grade courses. This has successfully increased levels of challenge and enjoyment for most young people. However, there is scope to widen the range of opportunities to increase young people's personal development and achievement. As the school moves

towards implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*, staff will need to ensure a broad general education for all young people at these stages. Young people have a few opportunities to link their learning across the curriculum through initiatives such as the anti-bullying project. The school needs to continue to increase the provision of physical education and religious and moral education from S4 to S6. Vocational courses taught in school and at Stevenson College are helping some young people to develop their skills for work. A few young people in S6 are challenged well by studying units through the Open University.

Most teachers use a range of activities and approaches well to meet the learning needs of all young people. Young people would benefit from more consistent use of information and communications technology to support their learning. A few departments have developed very effective systems to track young people's progress. The school should extend this practice across all departments. Staff in the pupil support base have created a very positive learning environment and they ensure that young people achieve success. The extended pupil support team provide high quality support to ensure that young people with additional needs are very well included in all aspects of school life. Young people who require them have learning plans which identify their strengths and provide advice for staff. However, a few of the learning targets set by teachers could be made more relevant by involving young people and their parents in setting and reviewing them.

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

The school has developed successful partnerships to support young people's learning and personal development. Staff should continue to improve the planning and co-ordination of projects with partner agencies to increase the benefits of this work. Young people in S6 are trained by the Wester Hailes Youth Agency to provide valuable support to their peers in aspects of personal and social education. Across the school, many young people have increased their involvement in the

school's eco programme. They have good experiences of environmental education through working with the John Muir Trust. The supportive Parent Council is eager to become more involved in improving the school. A significant minority of parents feel the school does not seek their views. The school is working to improve how it communicates with parents through newsletters and the school website. Staff from the Job Education and Training agency and Careers Scotland provide a valuable contribution to learning. Teachers work well with them to very effectively support young people to move into employment when they leave school. The school responds to complaints quickly and appropriately.

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

Young people enjoy working with their teachers and are keen to participate in activities which improve their school. Some teachers ask for their views about learning and teaching and make good use of their feedback. Young people would like this to be more consistent across the school. A few young people are involved in making decisions about school life through an effective charities committee and a senior citizens committee. They would like to contribute more to whole school improvements through, for example, extending the role of the pupil council. Staff are very committed to improving how they help young people to learn and achieve. They work well together in teams to plan new initiatives. Most staff are actively involved in improving learning through self-evaluation and sharing good practice across the school. To help identify and prioritise improvements, senior managers use a range of effective approaches including evaluating the quality of learning, analysing attainment data and consulting with parents. Recent improvements include changes to the curriculum and better provision for young people who require additional support. The school now needs to increase the involvement of young people, their parents and partners in improving learning, by seeking and using their views more directly.

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

Staff set high expectations for behaviour and encourage all young people to achieve well. Most young people have responded well to the increased pace and challenge most teachers have introduced. Young people are well cared for by their teachers. Their wider achievements are appropriately recognised through award ceremonies and assemblies. They learn about equality and respect through well-planned, engaging lessons in citizenship and personal and social development. Young people in S4 to S6 have a weekly meeting to discuss their learning and progress with a teacher who knows them well. However, many do not feel they are benefitting from this time. The school needs to improve arrangements for religious observance, taking account of national guidance. Staff are committed to increasing young people's understanding of healthy lifestyles but a few young people still do not recognise why this is important for them.

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

The headteacher, who has been in post for two years, has a very clear overview of the school's strengths and areas for development. He is setting a clear direction for the future of the school. Staff, parents and young people feel that he leads the school well. They support his vision of raising attainment and improving the life chances of all young people. Staff morale is high. A renewed focus on improving learning and teaching is helping more young people to be successful. The depute headteachers work well as a team and support the headteacher effectively. Staff across the school lead initiatives willingly. Their combined commitment to young people and their consistently strong focus on meeting young people's needs are important strengths which underpin the school's ability to improve further.

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.

- Use young people's, parents' and partner agencies' views directly to improve learning and achievement.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all learners and includes religious and moral education and physical education at all stages.
- Involving all staff, further improve the rigour of self-evaluation to ensure consistent improvements in young people's learning.
- Review 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 Forrester High School.

Improvements in performance	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: Patricia Watson

5 May 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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