

Stonelaw High School Rutherglen South Lanarkshire Council

18 November 2008

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 <http://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.

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1. The school

Stonelaw High School is a non-denominational school which serves Rutherglen in South Lanarkshire and the Toryglen area of Glasgow. The inspection was carried out in September 2008 at which time the roll was 1160. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average. Over the past five years, young people's attendance has improved.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Young people's commitment to the local, national and wider community through their fundraising and Fair Trade activities.

- The very wide range of learners' experiences and work with partners, which increase young people's achievements and develop their work-related skills.
- The positive benefits of peer support and team-working of young people in clubs and social enterprise projects.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities which staff provide for young people.

3. Examples of good practice

- The Fair Trade team which supports AIDS orphans in Africa and the extensive charity work which supports over thirty local, national and international charities.
- Physical education teachers' new and creative approach to improving the health and wellbeing of young people.
- A DVD called *Making a Difference*, created by young people to support other schools in South Lanarkshire to address anti-social behaviour.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

The majority of young people enjoy learning. They are motivated when they are active in their learning but across the school this does not happen often enough. Staff have recently improved the support they give to those who have difficulty with learning. Young people feel safe, secure and cared for in school. They think they are treated fairly and with respect. Less than half think that staff talk to them enough about how to improve their learning. These young people are not aware of their progress in learning and do not know what to do to improve. They have too few opportunities to take individual responsibility for their learning or work together to increase their skills as learners. Young people willingly take responsibility and contribute well to the wide range of school events and activities. They support others through working with younger people in classes and extensive charity work.

Young people contribute very well to the wide range of school events and activities. They value the opportunities provided by staff to take part in sports, fundraising and helping others. Their enterprise and citizenship skills have been recognised through a range of national awards, for example a Scottish Government Social Enterprise award and a COSLA gold award for citizenship. Staff actively encourage a healthy lifestyle. This was recognised by the achievement of a gold award for health promotion. Young people's art work has been displayed at the Scottish National Agricultural Museum. High quality examples of young people's art and design are well displayed throughout the school.

Achievement in reading and writing in S1/S2 is improving. In mathematics it has not improved and this year declined. This year, after several years without improvement, the performance of young people in S4 improved. Overall, young people's achievement in S5 has remained steady over the past five years. The percentage of young people achieving five or more Higher grade examination passes is decreasing. Young people with additional support needs are making good progress.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Young people in S1/S2 study a suitably broad range of subjects. Parents are very pleased with the work done to help settle their children into secondary school. A few teachers are beginning to build better on the learning young people have completed at primary school, for example by avoiding topics already covered. Teachers are beginning to look at the aims of *Curriculum for Excellence* and a number of departments are teaching a Scottish topic. Teachers now need to ensure that the learning has clearer purposes and that young people's skills develop well through this new approach. From S3 onwards, young people have a suitable choice of subjects. They also benefit from opportunities to go to college and work with partner agencies such as *Skill Force*. They have improving opportunities to gain additional awards such as ASDAN and the Duke of Edinburgh's award. The school is working well with colleges to support young people moving to further education, employment and training. Not all young people at S5/S6 benefit from the very high quality physical education because it is not included in their core activities.

Most tasks and activities are suitable for young people's learning needs. In some subjects, those with similar learning needs are grouped together to help teachers provide appropriate experiences. However, too often young people are given work that is either too easy or too difficult. At times they are given too much help which hinders them from developing as independent learners. A few young people in S3/S4 benefit from alternative approaches which include conversational Spanish and courses designed to enrich their learning. Teachers are given very helpful information about the young people they teach so that they can give suitable support where it is needed. They do not always use this information successfully. Support for learning staff spend too long with new pupils before agreeing targets for their learning. Support staff are beginning to monitor the progress of groups of disadvantaged young people. Young people felt well supported and were confident that if they reported any concerns to staff they would be helped. They spoke positively about going to teachers for extra help with their work. Young people benefit from supported study to help them prepare for national examinations.

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

The school works very well with a wide range of partners to increase the opportunities for achievement for all young people. Young people are well supported to develop work-related skills, citizenship skills and life skills. For example, *Universal Connections* has improved confidence and work-related skills for those young people experiencing difficulties in school. Young people benefit from the school's strong partnerships with Langside College, Motherwell College, South Lanarkshire College and youth learning services all of which provide vocational education. The school nurse works well with partner organisations to promote healthy living and wellbeing and a counsellor provides strong support for young people, including those who have suffered bereavement.

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

For many years, teachers have been involved in improving the school through self-evaluation. The school uses an external company to collect the views of young people, parents and staff. This has led to improvements in homework. The school should use all the available information to help make the school better. Parents told us that the Parent Council is developing well and making sure that their views are taken into account in school decisions. However, many young people say that the pupil council does not help to make the school better. They want to be more involved.

Senior managers meet with heads of departments to discuss young people's progress and achievement in national examinations, but this does not always result in enough action to improve learning and teaching. All staff have had training in improving learning, but only a few have applied it well in classes. Senior managers visit classes and help teachers manage behaviour. These visits should now have a greater focus on improving teaching and learners' experiences. The very good practice which they identify should be shared with others to help bring about improvement. All young people are tested to find out how they learn best and how likely they are to succeed later in school. Teachers could make better use of this information to help young people choose suitable courses, record their progress, set targets and help support their learning.

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

Young people are well cared for and supported sensitively by staff. This is done in part through the wide range of clubs and activities staff provide for them. Such experiences develop their social skills and friendships and contribute to their enjoyment of school life. Staff at all levels do not yet have a sufficiently clear understanding of their role in helping young people to achieve success more broadly. Some do not expect enough of young people. The school celebrates diversity and encourages young people to respect all others with a range of events including a day called *All different: All equal*. Young people created a DVD called *Making a Difference* to help other schools deal with anti-social behaviour. The school has suitable arrangements for religious observance and uses the local church for religious services and other events such as concerts and prize-giving.

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

The headteacher is very committed to the school which he has led for many years. He is highly respected locally. He gives a strong lead to developing partnerships with community organisations and understands the impact of wider community issues on learners' progress. He is well supported by four deputy headteachers who have each taken forward school improvements, for example, in health and wellbeing and supporting young people who have difficulties with their learning. While these improvements are important, more emphasis needs to be given to improving learning and teaching. Some teachers need to contribute more to improving learning. All staff now need to work together with senior managers to ensure learning and teaching meets learners' needs.

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.

- Staff will work together to improve the quality of learning and teaching, including the sharing of good practice.
- Staff will improve expectations of young people's achievement, including by agreeing clear learning targets and checking their progress.

- Staff will make better use of all data, including findings from classroom visits, to improve young people's achievements.

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 Stonelaw High School.

Improvements in performance	satisfactory
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	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Elizabeth Morrison
18 November 2008

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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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Footnote

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