

20 January 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Craigroyston 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 the development of young people's employability skills and the impact of the school's work with community and other partners. 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?

There is a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere in the school. Young people are friendly and helpful and support each other well. They are proud of their school and work confidently with visitors and partners. Young people are motivated, eager to learn and keen to be successful. They engage well in lessons when activities are stimulating and varied. When given the opportunity, young people respond very positively to working together and independently. They need more of these types of experiences to develop their independence in learning. In a few lessons, young people are too often passive in learning as a result of overly teacher-directed approaches. Learning conversations, which focus on what young people do well and their next steps in learning, are an emerging feature in lessons and tutor groups. Most young people are aware of their targets but many are less clear about how to achieve them. We have asked teachers to provide more consistently high-quality feedback to young people on how to improve their learning. In less than half of lessons observed, young people are developing the skills to evaluate their own and each other's work against clear criteria. More of these opportunities would help young people further improve their learning and performance.

Young people's learning is enriched and enhanced through a very wide range of opportunities to achieve beyond the classroom. These include sporting, musical and cultural activities and learning out of school. Young people across the school have access to a range of high-quality experiences which are delivered very well by a wide variety of partners. These include residential experiences by 'MY Adventure' and work experience and support for projects, such as Formula 1. The Careers Academy involves local businesses mentoring ten young people and developing their

employability skills. Young people's experiences with all these partners add relevance to their learning and help them to be better prepared for employment. At all stages, young people are successfully developing confidence, respect, ambition and skills in citizenship, leadership and teamwork through participating in a variety of activities. For example, many young people are taking on roles of responsibility as members of the pupil council, prefects or as buddies to younger pupils. The Mentors in Violence Prevention programme is bringing about positive changes as young people make a stand against socially unacceptable behaviour. Young people who are working toward their Sports Leaders and Dance awards are becoming skilled in managing their time and delivering coaching sessions to others in the school. Improving numbers of young people are gaining accreditation through a range of award programmes with the support of partner agencies. These include first aid qualifications, the Duke of Edinburgh's awards and certificates in peer education. Senior pupils taking part in the 'LEAPS' programme are gaining useful experience by visiting universities in advance of applying. This is helping them to prepare better for university and giving them confidence to engage with adults.

From S1 to S3, most young people are progressing well from their previous levels of attainment. Young people's literacy skills at S1 have improved as a result of the school's 'Fast Track' programme. However, their numeracy skills have not improved at the same pace. The school knows that it needs to improve the attainment of young people from S1 to S3 to ensure they have a strong foundation to build on as they move to the senior phase. From S4 to S6, overall achievement in literacy and numeracy has increased over time. Attainment in National Qualifications has improved in recent years. However, in most measures attainment remains below that of schools with young people with similar needs and backgrounds. The school is aware that staff need to continue to raise the attainment of all young people. Most young people are successful in moving on to a positive destination on leaving school. This has improved over the past four years and is in line with schools where young people have similar needs and backgrounds.

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

The school supports young people very well to develop and learn. Over a number of years, the school has invested significant energy and resources into improving the curriculum taking very good account of the local context and the needs of the young people. Amongst staff and partners, there is a strong sense of shared responsibility to support young people to improve their lives. Through these partnerships, the school is making a strong contribution to the regeneration of the neighbourhood and is a key player in the Total Craigroyston initiative. At S1 and S2, young people experience breadth and balance across all curriculum areas and at S3 they have opportunities to deepen their learning through choosing the courses they wish to study. Young people from S4 to S6 are treated as a single group in the senior phase. Commendably, the school enables all young people at these stages to design a curriculum which builds on their prior learning and achievements and suits their individual needs and interests. Through strong partnership working, the school is able to offer a wide range of options. For example, young people are able to study courses leading to a national qualification in school alongside a course in boat-building. The boat-building course is run by the Muirhouse Youth Development Group and a bike mechanics course through My

Adventure. Qualifications linked to learning supported by partners are an important strength of the curriculum. The school has positive relationships with its three associated primary schools. Staff from different curriculum areas have supported learning at the primary stages, working alongside primary class teachers. As a result, young people's knowledge and understanding of what they are learning is better.

The school has very significant numbers of young people who require additional support in their learning. At the same time, there are many young people who attain highly which provides different challenges for the school. Through pastoral and learning support links with associated primary schools, staff ensure that children's needs are well met when they move into S1. The Pupil Support team work very effectively with a wide range of partners to support young people. Very good relationships and highly effective communication between staff and many agencies ensure that information is shared to provide the prompt and appropriate support for those young people who require it. Support for learning staff work well with subject teachers, providing advice and support, and assessing the impact of their programmes and approaches. Staff across the school take considerable responsibility for meeting the varied learning needs of young people in their lessons. Pupil support assistants provide sensitive support to young people in lessons. The Base provides a quiet but focused space for young people to continue their learning with support. In lessons, most staff match learning activities well to the needs of individuals who experience difficulty, and to the needs of groups whose learning is below expected levels. We have asked teachers across the school to ensure that they provide more appropriate support and challenge in lessons to enable all young people to make as much progress as possible.

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

The headteacher is strongly committed to improving the life chances of young people. He has a clear vision about the direction of the school and has successfully shared it with staff, parents, young people and the wider community. The deputy headteachers provide the headteacher with strong support to improve all areas of the school. Staff are committed to improvement through self-evaluation. They evaluate the quality of their work regularly and its impact on young people's learning experiences. As a result, they are aware of the areas that require further development. The senior leadership team and members of the teaching and learning group have observed learning and teaching across the school. As a result, most staff are developing new ideas, being creative and sharing good practice with each other. Staff are encouraged to take on responsibilities within their subjects and across the school, such as being members of the learning and teaching group. The headteacher carries out a comprehensive review of young people's attainment with all staff in every subject department. This review results in action points to improve young people's future performance. He consults young people through his 'five a day' approach which enables young people to comment on various aspects of the school's work. As a result of this approach, the headteacher has made changes around the school, for example school uniform and security. In some departments, young people have opportunities to evaluate their learning and to suggest improvements to lessons, for example in physical education, English and art and design. This has led to teachers in these subjects reviewing their lessons and curriculum materials. The school has consulted parents for their views on the work of the school. The school should

continue to ensure that young people and stakeholders are involved in improving the school. The school is tracking and monitoring young people's progress well, and is aware of the need to develop these approaches further. This will enable the school to ensure that all young people are making appropriate progress.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- A shared vision which focusses on securing positive destinations for all young people.
- Strong engagement of partners in the development and delivery of the curriculum.
- Coordinated and high quality support for young people and their families.
- Staff and partners leading developments to improve the quality of young people's learning.
- Young people who are increasingly ambitious for their future.

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.

- To provide high quality learning experiences which challenge all young people.
- Together with partners, improve the tracking and monitoring of young people's progress across the curriculum.
- Further raise attainment.

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 evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified aspects of innovative practice which we would like to explore further. We shall work with the school and The City of Edinburgh Council to record the innovative practice and share it more widely.

Hakim Din
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/CraigroystonCommunityHighSchoolEdinburghCity.asp>

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