

19 January 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Bearsden Academy  
East Dunbartonshire 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 pupil improvement team and pupil voice, how the school plans improvements and community partnership working. 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?**

Young people learn and achieve very well at Bearsden Academy. They are highly motivated, friendly, and enthusiastic. They are very proud of their school, behave very well and show a very respectful and caring attitude to one another. Young people cooperate well with teachers and answer questions willingly and articulately. In most lessons, young people can talk confidently about what they are learning. They enjoy collaborating with each other. Teachers should continue to develop this type of learning further. In most lessons, young people are given increased responsibility for aspects of their work. For example, in an S1 drama class, young people worked very well independently and took a lead role in aspects of the lesson. We have asked the school to continue to develop the skills of critical and creative thinking further. Young people benefit from a very wide range of opportunities to learn beyond the classroom, for example they volunteer in a local care home. They 'litter pick' around the school, support staff to run clubs, such as the sculpture club, and participate willingly in important school committees. Young people demonstrate meaningful engagement in charity work. For example they raise money to build classrooms in Malawi. Pupil voice is very strong through, for example, the outstanding work of the Bearsden Aspiration team. They are helping their teachers to understand what type of tasks and activities help them to learn best. Young people take part in a very wide range of sports activities such as snowboarding, hockey, sailing and football.

Across the school, young people are achieving a broad range of skills very well, including important skills for life and work through their participation in valuable citizenship initiatives and cultural and sports events. An increasing number of young people are gaining the Duke of Edinburgh's awards. All young people in S3 are

working to achieve a Saltire award through volunteering work. Educational field trips, both national and international, provide challenging contexts for young people's development as individuals and working with others. Through work for example in Cambodia, Iceland and America young people are developing resilience and this is helping them have a better understanding of the values and beliefs of others. These valuable experiences and achievements are recognised well and help young people prepare well for the world of work. Young people gain skills in performance through their engagement in a very wide range of music and drama public performances such as the hugely successful recent school show 'Sunshine on Leith'. From S1 to S3, young people's progress in the broad general education is monitored within individual subjects. The information and evidence gathered can be used more effectively to monitor the overall progress of individual learners and groups. The school has supported young people to achieve very high levels of attainment consistently from S4 to S6 with steady improvement in key national measures over a number of years. Each year, a significant percentage of young people leave school having achieved outstanding success in national qualifications at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher level. Almost all young people are successful in moving on to higher or further education or employment on leaving school. Young people in the Language Communication Resource (LCR) make positive progress in both their achievement and attainment. They participate in clubs, benefit from extended work placements in the local community and progress well to a positive destination on leaving school. In our discussions with young people, they displayed with confidence how well they are progressing their health and wellbeing. Commendably, staff have recently developed a new tracking database which recognises young people's attainment and achievements within and outwith the school.

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

Most teachers plan their lessons well and provide stimulating activities in a high quality classroom environment. In a majority of lessons the level of challenge is targeted at more able learners and varied to suit their individual ability. In the best examples observed, lessons are well-planned and provide high quality opportunities for active learning and challenging activities for all. Teachers should continue to increase the pace of learning to meet individual needs and to offer a consistent level of challenge. While digital learning is used effectively with some teaching activities there are opportunities for further development in a majority of subject areas. Young people benefit from helpful opportunities to discuss their progress and consider their next steps with their guidance teacher who knows and supports them very well. Staff encourage young people to improve through study support, assertive mentoring and buddying programmes. The school is well-resourced to support young people to develop and learn through the addition of support assistants in the classroom. The school brings together a range of partner agencies such as social workers and a variety of health professionals to plan appropriate support jointly for a range of young people with particular needs. Within the effective LCR, tasks and activities are well matched to the needs of the learner. Young people in the LCR are integrated effectively into mainstream classes where appropriate.

The curriculum is based on Curriculum for Excellence guidance and advice and the school's vision of encouraging everyone to 'be all they can be'. Staff promote values of enthusiasm, respect, fun, humour and success. Teachers continue to plan and

develop the curriculum to provide young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding that lead to continued high attainment and achievement. From S1 to S3, young people experience a broad general education. Young people contribute positively to the life and ethos of the school. They have opportunities to learn through a broad range of subjects, a range of personal achievements for example in sports and music and a few opportunities for working across subjects. Staff understand the importance of strong literacy and numeracy skills and young people's health and wellbeing and plan learning well in these areas. Across the school, staff are developing new courses such as Cyber-security and Travel and Tourism to offer wider experiences for young people. The school should continue to develop its approach to linking learning across subjects to provide a coherent learning experience for all learners. Young people benefit from working with a wide range of partners, in and out of the school, who deliver high quality learning opportunities. For example, the science ambassadors programme is well planned with partners from the University of Glasgow. The school should develop further its programme of masterclasses to ensure that they support deeper learning and more challenge.

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

The headteacher is a very effective leader. Under his leadership the school has achieved significant improvements in a number of areas. He is very well respected by the whole school community including parents, staff and pupils. The complementary skills of the senior management team support the headteacher well in leading school improvement. Principal teachers and other staff play a very important role in school improvement. The outstanding learning and teaching taking place within the school sets a clear standard for all. Young people are central to the self-evaluation processes and outcomes. They are insightful, open and keen to improve their school. Young people provide highly effective feedback to their teachers on what works well in learning and teaching and what needs to improve further. As a result, teachers make improvements to their practice regularly. Staff work well with senior leaders to analyse qualification results. Principal teachers and senior leaders visit classes regularly to observe and support learning and teaching. Altogether, these approaches ensure ongoing improvements in young people's experiences and achievements. Staff should continue with their plans to involve parents and other partners more in the work and life of the school. As a result of the excellent self-evaluation practice the school is very well placed to continue to improve.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Friendly, articulate and polite young people who contribute actively to the school and wider community.
- The headteacher's leadership of improvement and change.
- The active contribution of all staff to the very positive climate for learning.
- The outstanding attainment in S4 to S6.
- The impact of self-evaluation on young people's experiences and achievements.
- The strong sense of partnership between all members of the school community.

We discussed with staff and East Dunbartonshire Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Staff should ensure consistently high quality and challenging learning experiences meet the needs of all and that the recent strong work, to improve the quality of school support plans, is taken forward robustly to meet the needs of identified learners.

### **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 East Dunbartonshire Council to record the innovative practice and share it more widely.

Aileen Monaghan  
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/BearsdenAcademyEastDunbartonshire.asp>

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0131 244 4330, or e-mail: [complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk) or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.