

28 April 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Linwood High School
Renfrewshire Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. The school includes the Kintyre Base which is a Renfrewshire Council area provision for young people with additional support needs. 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 work on profiling, developing young people's employability skills and the promotion of positive behaviour. 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?

Most young people across the school, including those attending the Kintyre Base, are confident and motivated in their learning. Most feel that they are progressing well with their studies, staff encourage them to do the best they can and they get help from teaching staff when they need it. They value the extra study support and resources offered by teachers, such as through supported study classes or accessing website resources. Many young people from S4 to S6 feel encouraged and supported in their learning through the one-to-one mentoring approach with an assigned teacher. Young people often work together in groups supporting each other well to solve problems. Most work well independently and take responsibility for their learning when required to do so. For example, when conducting and organising their work in research projects. Young people reflect on their learning in a range of ways such as through discussion with their teachers and completion of profiles. They find reflecting on their work as they complete their profiles helpful. The school has plans to develop the profiling system further to ensure that all young people understand fully the skills and knowledge they are gaining. This would also allow young people to set more meaningful targets for their learning. Overall, relationships across the school between young people and staff are positive and most young people respond well to teachers' guidance and instructions. However, a minority of young people display poor behaviour that disrupts the learning of others. The school is currently developing its promoting positive behaviour management strategies and working towards teachers applying them consistently across the school. Young people in the Kintyre Base are able to express their views well, for example through their pupil council. They have a say in what and how they learn.

Almost all young people from across the school are involved in a wide range of activities that they can take part in within or beyond school. Young people develop a range of skills and report improved self-esteem and aspirations through participation in work in a range of areas including horticultural, sporting, cultural, employability and volunteering activity. For example, young people are working effectively with the Royal Horticultural Society in a school-community garden project. They are working well to improve the environment and contribute to the increasingly positive image of Linwood in partnership with the local Community Development Trust. This work is building pride in the local community, developing young people's sense of belonging and showing them that their activities have an impact. Young people are developing their creativity skills very well and learning how to express themselves particularly through work in expressive arts classes and the many out-of-class activities for music and dance. Young people develop their leadership skills through a range of activities. All young people at S2 develop skills in team building and an awareness of developing cultures through participation in the Rapid Response challenge. All at S3 through involvement in the Youth Philanthropic Initiative show concern for others and develop further their researching and evaluative skills. A few carry on developing their citizenship skills through voluntary work with their chosen charities. A few young people at the upper stages have acted as leaders through volunteering in community activity and social action work as part of Inspiring Renfrewshire's Youth project and in partnership with Planning Aid Scotland. Their achievements have been recognised through gaining awards such as Saltire or SQA achievement awards. While there are high levels of young people becoming involved in achievement activities, we have asked staff to make more use of awards frameworks to support young people's ability to recognise skills development and their own achievements.

Overall, young people, including those who require additional support in their learning, are making appropriate progress from S1 to S3. The findings from the school's own monitoring and tracking approaches however indicate that this progress varies across curriculum areas. The school does not yet have processes in place to monitor attainment over time from S1 to S3. In recent years, the attainment of young people from S4 to S6 in national qualifications has varied across a range of national performance measures with few obvious trends. There is scope for improving attainment at all levels and across a range of subjects. Overall, young people perform either in line with or less well than other young people from across Scotland who have similar needs and backgrounds. Attainment in numeracy however is either in line with or above that of other young people from across Scotland with similar needs and backgrounds. The school recognises the need to improve attainment in literacy at National 5 level and above. There are signs of improvement in the proportion of young people achieving Advanced Higher awards. The school should ensure that all young people are presented for national qualifications at the appropriate level. There is a need to also ensure that all young people progress as well as they possibly can as they move from S4 to S6. Young people in the Kintyre Base are achieving national qualifications at National 4 level or equivalent in subjects such as English, mathematics and biology. In recent years most young people move on to a positive destination on leaving school with a higher proportion moving on to further education than local authority and national averages.

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

Most staff plan learning activities which are varied and matched well to the needs of individuals and groups. However, middle and higher attaining young people would

benefit at times from more challenge. Young people value the high-quality personal support provided by the pastoral care and support for learning staff. Young people who require additional support with their learning are identified early and effectively. They benefit from the additional support which is provided. Planning is effective for those who require additional support in their learning when moving from primary to S1 or from another Renfrewshire Council school to the Kintyre Base. Individual learner profiles (ILPs) provide useful information to staff about individual needs and advice on strategies which can be used to provide appropriate support. ILPs involve young people commenting on their learning and reflecting on the support they require. In moving to Renfrewshire Council's approach involving the use of a 'Child's Plan' staff should ensure that approaches are understood by all and that parents are fully involved in both the review process and in agreeing next steps. Staff have developed strong links with a range of partners such as the home link service and Youth Services project staff which helps them to support young people and their families better. Senior leaders need to work together to ensure that record keeping in key areas is consistent and robust and allows for regular review and evaluation. The school in partnership with Renfrewshire Council should review support plans for a few young people on part-time timetables in the Kintyre Base to ensure that they receive their full entitlement to education.

The school has developed its curriculum taking account of national advice on Curriculum for Excellence and within Renfrewshire Council's agreed curriculum model. From S1 to S3 young people study a broad range of subjects with opportunities to exercise choice at S2 and S3 in elective programmes which includes media, moviemaking, Heart Start and horticulture. At S3, young people can further exercise choice when given the opportunity to study subjects within curriculum areas in greater depth. There is a need to develop monitoring and tracking approaches further to ensure that young people are able to access courses at the appropriate level for them, allowing them to make the best progress possible. The school should continue to explore ways to extend the range of qualifications and levels on offer at S4. This would widen further the range of routes available to help them progress well to the upper stages. Although young people at S4 develop employability skills from a work experience programme, they would benefit from better access to vocational courses. The school should explore with Renfrewshire Council arrangements for achieving this. The school works in partnership very well with other local secondary schools and West College to widen the range of courses on offer to young people at S5 and S6. It has developed strong links with partners such as local businesses, the Holocaust Memorial Trust and Hearty Lives to develop skills for life and work and provide real-life and relevant contexts for learning. There is a need to build on curriculum links across subject areas with the two associated primary schools to ensure that staff can plan for continuity and progression from prior learning.

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

The headteacher demonstrates a clear commitment to improvement for all and is valued for supporting staff and young people to develop their knowledge and skills. Under her leadership the school has formed a number of productive partnerships which has enhanced learners' experiences. She is supported by an education support manager and by three depute headteachers who have all been appointed within the last two years. The depute headteachers are now beginning to have an impact on their areas of responsibility. Positive partnership between the school and Renfrewshire Council staff has resulted in change being managed effectively in the

Kintyre Base. For example, where appropriate, young people learn more often in mainstream classes which is enabling their needs to be met better. Staff are committed to improving outcomes for the young people of Linwood High School. They reflect on their own practice, are committed to improving their skills through professional learning and participate or take the lead in a range of working groups or committees helping to improve the school. Staff use a range of approaches to evaluate the quality of their work. This includes the use of pupil and parental surveys, reviewing attainment in national qualifications and learning visits by all staff. Staff also helpfully contribute to evaluation activities with local community groups. There is scope for young people to have more of a voice and to be able to influence school improvement further. The school's approaches to self-evaluation are identifying areas for development. All staff now need to work together to achieve the desired improvement in areas such as attainment, consistency in high-quality learning experiences, standards of positive behaviour and reducing exclusion levels. The senior management team through their departmental links need to support and challenge appropriately to secure improvement across the school. The school has capacity to improve further as it continues to work with Renfrewshire Council.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Building young people's confidence and creativity both within and beyond the classroom.
- Young people who are engaging with and improving their local community, enabled and supported by strong community links.
- Support for young people requiring additional support across the Kintyre Base and the rest of school.
- The effective focus on employability and skills for life and work.

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

- Develop a consistent approach across the school to promoting positive relationships and behaviour.
- Develop further the approaches to monitoring and tracking to raise attainment.
- Continue to review and develop the curriculum to meet learning needs and improve the attainment of all young people.
- Ensure that the findings from the self-evaluation processes are taken forward across the school leading to the desired improvement for all young people.

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 visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Renfrewshire Council will inform parents about the school's progress. Our Area Lead Officer will maintain contact with Renfrewshire Council to monitor progress.

Marie McAdam
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/LinwoodHighSchoolRenfrewshire.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 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.