



**Prestwick Academy
South Ayrshire Council
17 March 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

Prestwick Academy is a non-denominational school which serves the town of Prestwick and the surrounding area in South Ayrshire. The roll was 1148 when the inspection was carried out in January 2009. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/08.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Young people's courtesy, engagement in learning and motivation.
- Staff's commitment to, and support for, young people's learning and wellbeing.
- The positive and productive relationships between staff and young people.
- Effective tracking which helps to improve attainment.
- High-quality leadership across the school, including the headteacher's outstanding drive for improvement.
- The high standard of new accommodation and its positive influence on the quality of young people's learning experiences.

3. Examples of good practice

- Development of the use of digital examination papers.
- Monitoring and tracking of young people's progress and attainment.
- Positive impact of self-evaluation on mathematics attainment.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Almost all young people are well motivated and enjoy their learning.

They are confident, relate well to classmates and respond well to staff. Young people are given some opportunities to work and think independently but need more such opportunities. In a number of subjects, but not all, young people receive high-quality feedback to help improve their learning. Young people are benefiting from important improvements in learning and assessment but these are not yet consistent across all lessons. Almost all young people behave well. The number of exclusions is reducing encouragingly.

Many young people are improving their achievement and skills by taking on extra responsibilities, some of which help to develop important citizenship skills. For example, seniors mentor their younger peers. Almost all young people feel the school is making them more confident. School clubs, shows, field trips and visits enhance achievement for many. A large number recently took part in an inter-house challenge. The wide range of sporting activities includes gymnastics, volleyball, netball, football and boxercise. Several young people are members of the Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra. The school's string orchestra won the Bank of Scotland Ayrshire Music Festival Award. Young people enjoy a particularly strong experience of enterprise through, for example, the talent show and a fashion show run by the S5/S6 "Young Fundraisers".

The majority of young people in S1/S2 achieve appropriate levels in mathematics, listening, talking, reading and writing. They make good progress in classwork across the rest of the curriculum. Young people's performance at S3 to S6 in national examinations has been in line with or above national averages. Their performance has generally been as good as, or better than, those in schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. Young people with additional support needs are making good progress. Almost all young people leaving the school progress to employment, further or higher education.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Young people study a broad range of subjects from S1 to S6. Staff

recognise they need to improve curriculum links with primary schools. Courses for National Qualifications, ASDAN and at a local college meet needs well at S4 to S6, although choice is limited in some areas such as modern foreign languages. A range of experiences across the curriculum develop enterprise and citizenship skills well. Young people have too little time for physical education and religious and moral education at S5/S6, and have no formal programme of personal, social and health education at S6. The school supports well young people's progression from S1 to S6 and on to employment or further studies. The substantial time given to daily registration of young people is currently not used productively. The school has a clear rationale for, and has taken innovative steps to encourage, the development of *Curriculum for Excellence*. It is already developing aspects such as numeracy and interdisciplinary studies.

Young people feel safe, confident and well cared for in the school. They receive very good support for their pastoral needs and for their learning. Specialist staff, including support assistants, work skilfully with young people with additional support needs. They make effective use of information and communications technology (ICT). The school is particularly strong at supporting young people with dyslexia to make progress across all subjects. Learning support staff identify and track the progress of young people needing support, through their productive links with primary school staff and subject teachers. Across a range of subjects, a few teachers need to match tasks more closely to learning needs. Staff involve young people who have specific needs and their parents well in planning, and provide clear attainment targets.

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

Staff coordinate and work well with a range of partners to support young people's learning. Support agencies including psychological services, social work, police and health services cooperate well to ensure high-quality support for young people. The school nurse

makes a valued contribution. Partner agencies make important contributions to the programme in personal, social and health education, particularly at S5/S6. Local employers provide valuable work experience placements and support the school's programme for enterprise in education. Stow College provides helpful support for young people working on an enterprise initiative. The school and Parent Council work well together and show a strong and growing sense of partnership. The Council takes a keen interest in the work of the school and contributes well to its efforts to improve partnerships with the wider group of parents. The headteacher is proactive in liaising with local residents and organisations, to secure their support for the school. Almost all parents are happy with the school. They feel that staff are making important progress in developing more effective communication with them.

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

Staff and young people work well to improve the school community. The headteacher takes a strong lead in promoting a positive view of young people, reflecting their high-quality contribution to the life of the school community. Senior managers are making good progress in improving the ways in which the school understands and improves the quality of its work. They lead staff well in identifying aspects for improvement to enhance young people's learning. Staff work hard to develop their professional skills and to improve learning and teaching. Many give generously of their time to provide additional support, supervise social areas, offer clubs and supported study sessions and take part in working groups. Many young people take on duties to support younger peers and lead social and charity fundraising events. The pupil council makes important contributions to the life of the school, for example supporting the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Staff are developing effective approaches to give young people a stronger voice in the school.

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

Young people feel that their teachers encourage them to strive for high standards. The school's expectations of attendance, behaviour and achievement are high. Young people feel they are treated fairly and that they and staff have mutual respect. Staff celebrate young people's achievements but some of these need to be more effectively identified and tracked. The school promotes healthy lifestyles and encourages awareness of equality and diversity, with important contributions in these areas made by the personal, social and health education programme. The school won an award from the British Council for aspects of its work in international education.

Arrangements for religious observance are appropriate. Staff maintain consistently high standards in their responsiveness to parents' queries and concerns.

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

The school has a very clear sense of common purpose and direction under the leadership of the new headteacher. With skilful support from senior and middle managers, staff are building well on the school's traditional strengths including its strong attainment in examinations. Increasing numbers of staff and young people are making valuable contributions to leadership in the school, addressing targets in its ambitious improvement plan. Staff are achieving sustained progress in transforming young people's learning and achievements, and in the school's planning for continuous improvement.

9. What happens next?

The school's self-evaluation is leading to improvements in young people's learning. As a result, the inspection team was able to change its focus during the inspection to help the school plan to improve even more.

HMIE will make no further visits following publication of this report. The education authority will let parents know about the school's progress. It will do this as part of its normal arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools. We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Further improve the consistency of young people's learning experiences, sharing good practice.
- Continue to improve the curriculum with a focus on *Curriculum for Excellence*, building on effective innovations.
- Use all parents', young people's and staff's views to help improve learning.

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 Prestwick Academy.

Improvements in performance	good
Learners' experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	very good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Bill Geddes

17 March 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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