

14 June 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

### **Basil Paterson Middle School, Edinburgh**

HM Inspectors recently visited Basil Paterson Middle School. The visit was part of our quality improvement and professional engagement visits with independent schools which complement the general programme of inspections. The approach allows us to maintain our knowledge of schools in the independent sector throughout Scotland, and provides assurance to parents on the school's capacity for evaluating its own work and making improvements which have a direct impact on the quality of experiences for its young people. Our visit was based on the school's self-evaluation and priorities identified for school improvement. During our visit inspectors talked to staff and young people and worked together with the Head of Secondary Education and other staff about the planned developments to ensure outcomes for children and young people continue to improve.

#### **How well does the school ensure outcomes for children / young people continue to improve?**

Young people are friendly and respond well to the learning on offer at the school. They demonstrate good concentration in classes and show well-developing research and evaluative skills. They are keen to engage in discussion about the topics they are studying. They speak about helpful regular conversations with staff and managers to help them learn better. Learning and teaching is adapted regularly to support improvement. The Head of Secondary Education, senior managers and staff in curriculum areas are all reflective practitioners. They work well with staff and young people encouraging them to collaborate well with each other. Staff plan well to offer all learners a personalised curriculum with well-considered learning and teaching approaches. This session the school has reviewed and updated their child protection and safeguarding policy and guidance to support young people's wellbeing and safety. The care and welfare of young people is given the highest priority throughout the school. All staff contribute to providing a caring, safe and nurturing learning environment. Tasks, activities and resources are suited well to the level of each learner. Staff know the young people well and understand their individual needs. Parents visit the school very regularly. They work with staff to help the young people learn better.

Learners are well-behaved and respectful. They listen and cooperate well with teachers and each other. When responding to questioning, young people are articulate and enthusiastic. Teachers are very supportive and offer learners encouragement, challenge and advice. Learners enjoy the small class sizes, the relaxed atmosphere and individual support given at Basil Paterson School. They believe this contributes positively to their wellbeing and academic progress. Young

people appreciate the opportunities which they have to reflect on their learning. They are being empowered to be more involved in learning through the use of self-evaluation and clear targets set in all subjects. They receive regular useful praise, challenge and advice from their teachers through conversation and written feedback about their progress and next steps. The quality of wall displays should be improved to enhance the school as a high quality learning environment, as well as to celebrate young people's achievements and contributions to school. Young people should be involved in completing this work. The school now needs to consider how it can develop further the involvement of all young people as leaders, and in having an increased say about how to improve their learning.

All staff use a range of methods to monitor and evaluate their work. Staff are observed regularly by senior managers. These visits support and challenge staff to improve and focus on clear priorities for school improvement. Staff consider how young people complete their learning objectives successfully, how enthusiastic they are and how well their learning enables them to be independent learners. Almost all young people receive a very personalised service within the classroom setting. Staff with responsibility for providing additional support for learners take positive steps to identify and address issues such as health problems, family circumstances or social and emotional issues which may affect young people's learning. Young people are very proud of the support they are offered by staff at the school.

Young people are empowered to work together and achieve success within Basil Paterson School. For example, they are developing their racket skills and work well as a team through badminton and tennis sessions at a local sports centre. They are understanding how to improve their health and wellbeing and can evaluate their own progress well through weekly gym sessions. Through this regular exercise they are developing skills in motivation and confidence. Young people develop their social skills and skills for life and work through their work experience opportunities. Learners are developing their confidence and formal communication skills through planning, organising and completing work-related tasks in various local companies. Young people are achieving well across a range of GCSE and IGCSE accredited courses. In 2014-2015 young people achieved positive academic performances, for example, in English, mathematics, business studies, geography and Dutch.

The school's curriculum is based on the school's values of positivity, potential, ambition and respect, ensuring the wellbeing of young people is at the heart of everything the school does. Senior managers and all staff continue to develop the curriculum. They are focussing on increasing subject choice each session and extending the quality of new courses. This will include consideration of new courses in expressive arts-based subjects. At present there is no provision for arts education (art and design, drama, dance or music). This should be a strong focus for curriculum development to ensure that all learners experience a broad curriculum. The school is preparing to put new plans in place to alter the length of the school day and the blocks of time allotted to each subject. The new, shortened learning periods will help young people to keep their focus better and enable more space within the timetable to broaden curriculum choice. The school recognises and understands the need to engage more with the local community to enable young people to develop new relationships with other young people. This will also help support learners to broaden their learning and improve their social skills in new contexts.

In her short time in post the Head of Secondary Education has shown herself to be an effective leader who is well respected by learners, staff, pupils and parents. Under her leadership the school is already showing aspects of improvement. She is very visible around classes and has an 'open door' policy in place for all stakeholders. She sets positive expectations for all around working hard and showing care, consideration and kindness to one another. She has a clear vision for continued school improvement. From the school's own end of year parent comments, parents are happy with the school's provision. Staff speak positively about a Head of Secondary Education who encourages them actively to improve. They also feel well supported on their career journey and enjoy the learning and teaching environment. The academic manager is a very creative and able professional who supports the work of the Head of Secondary Education well. Together they have a range of complementary skills and take forward creative ideas for school improvement. They provide helpful, supportive leadership across the school and this is valued by staff. Unpromoted staff work well together as a team and individually. They are keen to improve their skills and work together. Staff should continue to consider ideas to improve the breadth of learning offered within their subjects and beyond the school building. The Basil Paterson School Advisory Board has very recently been created. They have acknowledged the need to begin to support, challenge and advise the managers and staff on areas for school improvement.

We are confident that the school can improve its arrangements and procedures for ensuring continued improvement in the quality of education provided. We will make no further visits at this time. The school and the Advisory Board will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the progress of the school. Our link Inspector to the school will maintain contact and monitor progress in how the school is developing the arrangements for governance.

**Aileen Monaghan**  
HM Inspector

Additional evidence for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/BasilPatersonSchoolEdinburghCity.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.