

26 April 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

The Compass School, Haddington

HM Inspectors recently visited The Compass 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, parents and children and worked together with the headmaster and senior 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?

The commitment of staff to improve outcomes for children across the school is strong. In close partnership with the headmaster and the depute headteacher, staff embrace approaches to self-evaluation. They are encouraged to be creative and use their strengths to share practice and benefit all children across the school. In recent years, staff use national guidance, such as the professional standards from the General Teaching Council for Scotland, to reflect effectively on their practice. This approach leads to the identification of relevant priorities for development in the school improvement plan. In consultation with the Board of Governors and staff, the school has reviewed and updated its wellbeing and child protection policy. Questionnaire responses indicate staff know the school's procedures for keeping children safe and almost all children feel safe at school. The Board plan to prioritise the identification of a designated governor to oversee approaches to child protection. In partnership with the school, the Board are committed to monitoring the implementation of the revised policy rigorously. In doing so, they plan to improve further the school's caring and supportive environment ensuring all children develop resilience, for example in situations outwith the classroom such as the playground.

The school's systematic approaches to self-evaluation, led by the headmaster and the depute headteacher, improve outcomes for children. Approaches include working alongside the Board of Governors who, for example, played an active role in 'testing out' an area of strength identified by the school. Parental views are gathered and the school can demonstrate ways that comments from staff and parents are taken into consideration. The 'Compass Parents Initiative Group' supports the school well in taking forward areas needing addressed through for example, suggesting parent

friendly approaches. The school will be working with them to share relevant information with parents from the revised wellbeing and child protection policy. Increasingly, children's views about their learning and the work and life of the school are being taken into consideration. Recent surveys about school lunches and the playground provided insightful comments from children. We asked the school to continue to improve the use of pupil voice through a more structured approach ensuring all voices can be heard and acted upon. As the school continues to improve, we asked staff to monitor and track rigorously children's progress and participation in the many initiatives and opportunities that are available. There is a need to ensure the impact of development priorities maintain and improve even further children's attainment and achievements.

Across the school there are examples of high quality learning through motivating and exciting experiences. Children benefit from the high expectations staff have towards individual's attainment and achievement. By Form 8, almost all children make very good progress and when given the opportunity, they work very well in pairs and small groups. Children at Form 1 are highly motivated, happy and learn very well in a stimulating and dynamic environment. Their listening and talking skills are sophisticated and they play purposefully, interacting very well with each other and adults. Across the school children's skills, knowledge and understanding has been developed very well. They continue to speak with confidence and take great pride in their school and their work. They talk articulately about the tasks that teachers set for them. The school plans to develop further children's skills in profiling their learning to show progress and help them to understand themselves as learners more effectively. Children needing additional help with their learning are identified early and supported to make appropriate progress. The school continues to enhance the support for learning arrangements. Recently they introduced a more focused approach towards the identification and assistance for children needing targeted support for their wellbeing.

The school has successfully introduced digital technology to enhance learning. Children and staff use mobile devices with increasing confidence and there are some highly creative uses of 'apps' to share learning. Children at Form 2 can capture images from the internet and insert them accurately into a digital book they are creating. Children at Form 7 use the 'green screen' effect to create a visually relevant background to their video reports about the subject they are researching. Digital codes accessed by mobile devices create interactive displays throughout the school. At Form 6, for example, embedded video clips in 3-dimensional displays show children's experiential learning about volcanoes. By Form 8, enhanced by digital technologies, children make outstanding progress in their French, speaking and writing. The school plans to continue to evaluate the use of digital technologies. There is a need to ensure all use of digital technology enhances learning and that children's digital literacy skills lead to them becoming effective digital innovators through a progressive approach.

A strong feature of the school is the emphasis on developing children's leadership, cultural and sporting skills. As a result, children achieve very well in art, music and in sport. Almost all staff, including support staff, contribute enthusiastically to achieving this outcome. Displays of art work show high quality and individualised responses from children using a range of techniques and media. In music, children perform very

well in a range of situations and gain many successes at competitive level. Children benefit from a wide range of sporting opportunities including hockey, rugby, surfing and a skateboarding club. They participate and gain frequent success in swimming, cross-country and hockey. To achieve the school's visions and high priority placed on sport, staff and parents take a very active part and the school accesses a range of facilities beyond the school grounds. Children have leadership opportunities, particularly at the older stages of the school. Across the school, they are encouraged to lead and manage their own learning. Children from different classes 'buddy' each other and older children are encouraged to lead the learning of the younger children. The school plans to provide further leadership opportunities and develop these important skills for life for more children.

We are confident the school has the necessary arrangements and procedures in place to ensure continued improvement in the quality of education provided. The school and Board of Governors will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the progress of the school. During the visit, we identified an aspect of innovative practice which we would like to explore further. We shall work with the school and Board of Governors to record the innovative practice and share it more widely.

Elizabeth C Montgomery
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/TheCompassSchoolEastLothian.asp>.

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