

**REPORT TO:** Education Committee

**MEETING DATE:** 18 June 2014

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

**SUBJECT:** Inspection of Musselburgh Grammar School by Education Scotland

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To report to Committee on the report by Education Scotland on the inspection of Musselburgh Grammar School.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to: -
- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report (Appendix 1).
  - (ii) Note the good quality of education provided by the school.
  - (iii) Acknowledge the efforts of the Head Teacher and staff in the planned improvements.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Musselburgh Grammar School was inspected in February 2014 by Education Scotland and a report was published in May 2014.
- 3.2 The report noted that the particular strengths of the school were:
- Friendly, well-mannered young people who are interested in their learning.
  - The steps taken to broaden and enrich young people's learning beyond the classroom.
  - Support for young people with a very wide range of needs.
  - The willingness of staff to lead on improving aspects of young people's experience.

- 3.3 Education Scotland agreed the following areas for further improvement with the school and education authority:
- Continue to develop the curriculum to ensure all young people maximise their progress.
  - Improve attainment at all stages, including in national examinations.
  - Improve approaches to self-evaluation ensuring they lead to better outcomes for young people.
- 3.4 As a result of the inspection, Education Scotland Area Lead Officer will work with East Lothian Council to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved within one year of the publication of this letter. Depending on the outcome, Education Scotland will then decide whether it will carry out a further inspection.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

#### **5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Financial - None

6.2 Personnel - None

6.3 Other - None

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 The inspection of Musselburgh Grammar School (Appendix 1).

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<b>DATE</b>	28 May 2014

13 May 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Musselburgh Grammar School  
East Lothian 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 impact of the support for young people's progress, including help to achieve a positive destination on leaving school and how well the curriculum meets all learners' needs. 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 are motivated and keen to do well. Most behave well in class and around the school and willingly discuss their learning when given the opportunity. Young people in the senior school appreciate the additional opportunities provided by staff in the form of study support or Easter revision classes to help them in their learning. Most young people collaborate well in pairs in small groups and are supporting one another effectively in sharing their learning in classes. Through well-planned, shared discussions in for example English and social studies, they are able to develop and adapt their thinking and show respect for the views of others. Young people respond well to the increased level of challenge provided by teachers in some classes, and their high expectations. Their learning experiences are meaningfully enhanced through the school's commitment to organising additional activities including trips and field visits which strengthen relationships and help to make their learning more relevant. Young people, particularly those from S1 to S3, require more consistent high quality feedback from staff to help them discuss, review and evaluate their own progress.

Young people at all stages are performing and achieving well in a range of sporting, musical, cultural, volunteering, and creative activities and events. An impressive programme of musical activities, including a ukulele group, help young people to develop their individual skills and ability to perform, often as part of bands, ensembles and orchestras. Annual productions like the Cre8, the 'pop-up-gigs' and performance shows involve large numbers of young people in cross-stage groups, performing and supporting, both front of house and back stage. This develops their confidence to

present to an audience as well as their social and team working skills. The recent wider achievement day helped young people appreciate the range of interests across members of the school community and the opportunities available locally to explore other avenues of involvement. The Musselburgh Grammar School television channel recognises, encourages and promotes young people's achievements very effectively. Young people's attendance and sustained effort in class is recognised through the successful whole-school Merit Award scheme. Outdoors, young people work effectively with the East Lothian Ranger Service in environmental restoration initiatives. Parents organised a very successful careers event which helped young people in thinking about realistic possibilities for their future beyond school. Young people in the senior school have good opportunities for leadership, such as the community sports leadership award but those in junior years are not yet benefitting from similar opportunities. While some young people are gaining accreditation for their achievements, there is scope for the school to consider how to extend this to a much larger number of young people at all stages. The school does not yet track young people's progress from S1 to S3 closely enough, including their progress in literacy and numeracy. Very few young people leave school without attaining at least five national qualifications and those who choose to return to school in S5 and S6 are successful in building upon their prior achievements. However there are few improving trends in any of the national attainment measures. The school works with young people, their families and its partners to support young people moving into employment, training or further education. There needs to be a continued focus for those leaving at the end of S4 who are unlikely to secure a positive destination on leaving school. Overall, levels of attainment from S4 to S6 are not yet high enough. From S4 to S6, performance in national examinations is poorer overall than in schools serving young people with similar needs and from similar backgrounds and below national averages.

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

The curriculum is effective in supporting young people to learn and develop, and aims to reflect the school's motto of 'Striving for excellence, caring for all'. Young people in S1 and S2 learn across all curricular areas. Courses and programmes reflect Curriculum for Excellence guidance well. The skills course in S2 supports young people to become more resilient and to persevere in their learning when things become more challenging. In S3, young people can select from a range of additional enrichment courses which broaden their skills base. The school needs to ensure that young people have the opportunity to review their choices for national qualifications at the end of S3. Not all young people from S1 to S3 are currently experiencing a broad enough curriculum. The school needs to build on its work thus far to provide greater opportunity for young people to link their learning across subjects. We have asked staff to continue to develop curricular links with primary schools to ensure that young people in S1 can build on what they have already learned and make suitable progress. In S5 and S6 young people can select from a very wide range of appropriate subject courses and programmes. Very good links with Queen Margaret University and The University of Edinburgh through the South East Scotland Academies partnership are helping a group of young people, through a focus on hospitality and tourism, to develop their skills for learning, life and work. The school's positive work in this area has been recognised nationally.

Most tasks and activities in classes match the needs of most young people well and allow them to make appropriate progress in their learning. In lessons, most teachers provide good levels of additional support for young people when it is needed. In a few lessons, some staff need to tailor the tasks more effectively to all young people's needs and ensure consistently high expectations of what they can achieve. Young people requiring additional support are identified appropriately and staff take very effective steps to ensure they are involved and engaged in classes. Staff are skilled in picking up on young people's identified learning needs and intervening well to provide an appropriate level of challenge in their subject areas. They support young people with additional needs very well during their move from primary school. Specialist staff provide a range of effective supports in relation to helping teachers overcome barriers to young people's progress, including communication, behaviour and learning. They liaise well with class teachers providing them with useful information and strategies to meet the needs of learners. Senior staff have now begun to track closely the progress of young people who are most vulnerable. We have asked teachers working with support staff to take steps to simplify their approaches to planning and sharing information about the support for young people requiring additional help in their learning. The school has yet to put in place a clear approach to ensuring that all young people have regular discussions about their learning and progress with staff who know them well.

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

Over the last two sessions, the school has been developing its approaches to improving its work with some success. Senior managers observe the teaching of promoted staff and the promoted staff in turn monitor the experiences of young people in each subject department. It is not yet clear how effective these approaches have been in improving outcomes for young people. The headteacher scrutinises young people's reports and analyses the data about each individual's progress to identify reasons behind any underperformance. The headteacher meets middle managers to discuss young people's attainment in each department and these key messages are shared with staff more widely. Action points need to be identified more clearly from these meetings to ensure a more consistent follow up from all staff. While the school improvement plan has identified a suitable number of national and local priorities, the school now needs to refocus on raising attainment and on improving the quality of learning and teaching in future plans. The school recently undertook a whole-school review of the quality of young people's learning and is now well placed to plan agreed actions to address the findings. There is scope for the school to gather the views of all stakeholders about the school's work including staff, parents and partners more regularly and to make it clear what action it anticipates taking in response to their views. There is a need for a more formal approach to sharing existing good practice in classes more widely. We have asked senior managers to visit classes more often and to challenge and support staff more to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching and to raise attainment.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Friendly, well-mannered young people who are interested in their learning.
- The steps taken to broaden and enrich young people's learning beyond the classroom.

- Support for young people with a very wide range of needs.
- The willingness of staff to lead on improving aspects of young people's experience.

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

- Continue to develop the curriculum to ensure all young people maximise their progress.
- Improve attainment at all stages, including in national examinations.
- Improve approaches to self-evaluation ensuring they lead to better outcomes for young people.

### **What happens at the end of the inspection?**

Our Area Lead Officer will work with East Lothian Council to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved within one year of the publication of this letter. Depending on the outcome, we will then decide whether we will carry out a further inspection. During the inspection, we identified an aspect of innovative practice which we would like to explore further in order to share it with others. As a result, we will work with the school and East Lothian Council in order to record and share the innovative practice more widely.

Donald A. Macleod  
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/MuselburghGrammarSchoolEastLothian.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.

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