



**North Berwick High School
East Lothian Council
10 February 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

North Berwick High School is a non-denominational school which serves the town of North Berwick and surrounding rural area. The inspection was carried out in November 2008 at which time the roll was 939. Young people's attendance was above the national average in 2006/07.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Confident young people who actively contribute as good citizens to the school and the community.
- Strong curriculum with positive developments in *Curriculum for Excellence*, including planned learning across subjects.
- Developing and recognising young people's achievement.
- The very effective support for young people with additional support needs.
- The strong commitment of the headteacher and depute headteachers to high achievement and improvement.
- The strong lead being provided by a number of staff at all levels to improving learning.

3. Examples of good practice

- A health promotion initiative about the sources of food.
- An effective system for tracking all aspects of young people's achievement.
- Developing citizenship across the school.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Almost all young people are motivated and eager learners. They engage well in class and group discussions and practical activities.

They enjoy opportunities to learn together. Young people are increasingly taking more responsibility for their own learning, setting targets and reviewing their progress with their teachers. In most lessons, they understand how to improve their work. Staff are aware of the need to share good practice across the school and further develop young people's skills as independent learners.

Young people are making very good progress in their personal and social development. They are developing well as confident young people with a strong sense of community and the responsibilities of citizenship. Over the past two years, all first years have achieved the John Muir Award for their work in the local community. Young people are very active in raising funds for charity, a good example of which is sponsoring children in the developing world. Many in S5/S6 demonstrate very effective leadership qualities. They run the charity committee, organise regular events like the Christmas Fair, nominate younger peers for citizenship awards, run the sailing club and run the school newspaper. They act as house captains, buddies and peer supporters in class.

Young people are achieving very well and making good progress in their learning. At the end of S2, most are achieving appropriate national levels in reading. A majority are achieving these levels in writing and in mathematics. In most other subject areas in S1 and S2 young people are progressing well and levels of achievement are high. Overall, performance in national examinations at the end of S4 and S6 is outstanding. Levels of achievement have been consistently high, well above national averages. In most key measures, young people do much better than they do in schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. Young people with additional support needs are making very good progress. The school has in place plans to address the relative under-performance evident in a small number of subjects. Most young people take part in out-of-class activities and are achieving well, particularly in music and in sport. Several students regularly achieve their gold Duke of Edinburgh's award. Young people progress well on leaving school. The majority continue their education with almost all others going on into employment.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The school provides a very good range of appropriate courses from S1 to S6. Staff respond flexibly to the needs of young people. For example, courses in philosophy, psychology and in travel and tourism were recently introduced into S5/S6. Some *skills for work* courses are now offered in S3/S4 in partnership with local agencies and employers. Staff have made a positive start in introducing *Curriculum for Excellence*. Young people in S1/S2 are now having more opportunities to link their learning across a range of their subjects. Some examples include learning about the holocaust, energy issues and sources of food. The school has also taken effective steps to look at how young people's skills in literacy and numeracy are being developed across all areas of their learning. The provision of timetabled core physical education for pupils in S3 and S4 is presently insufficient.

Across the school, staff are well informed about the learning needs of young people in their classes. Most teachers are planning well for a range of young people's needs, selecting appropriate tasks and activities. They seek advice from specialist staff and work well with them in class to support those who may need additional help. The school is very effective in identifying and putting in place plans for young people with additional support needs. Early links with the primary schools play an important role in this process. A range of strategies is used including specialist programmes and awards through the ASDAN scheme to encourage and support progress in learning. Very good information technology resources are used to support individuals. Very effective teamwork across a range of staff ensures well targeted support for those who are more vulnerable or have more complex needs. Young people in S6 provide important support as mentors for their younger peers.

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

Staff actively seek to work with individuals and agencies to enrich and support the learning of young people. They work very effectively with East Lothian Integration Service, Careers Scotland, the Youth Café and the Healthy Respect drop-in centre. Links with local groups like 'Bridges' and 'The Shed' help to provide good vocational opportunities for some young people. The very active Parent Council and the parent teacher association make important contributions to the life of the school. While overall parents are happy with the school, some would welcome more regular communication and information about their child's progress.

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

Young people in S5/S6 play a very active role in proposing and taking forward new ideas to improve their school community. Recent examples include the introduction of awards for citizenship and new health promotion initiatives. The house and school councils need to be more involved in identifying and contributing to school improvement. Staff are increasingly talking to young people about how learning could be improved. The school is aware of the need to extend this good practice. Most staff work effectively to improve the learning and achievement of young people. They make very good use of attainment and other information to identify areas for improvement. They evaluate the impact of new initiatives, discuss and consult with colleagues, before drawing up plans for further improvement. They are active members of working groups which take forward improvements across the school. The senior management team works well with staff to support and guide them in these processes. They evaluate the quality of learning in lessons and provide helpful feedback to staff. This good practice needs to be extended to include all staff in sharing good practice in learning and teaching directly with each other. Overall, the impact of these effective processes can be seen in the consistently high achievement of young people.

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

The school has a very positive ethos which values all young people. Most are happy at school and feel they are treated fairly and with respect. They are generally well behaved and courteous. They show care and concern for others. High expectations are shared by staff, parents and young people. Achievements are recognised and celebrated regularly. Young people value the recognition they are given for positive behaviour and the awards they gain for good citizenship. The school has in place good processes for recording young people's wider achievements. Staff and students have worked well together to promote health and wellbeing and this is a strong feature within the school. Young people learn about equality and diversity issues in class and in whole school events, for example Holocaust Day. Local ministers support the school in providing regular opportunities for religious observance.

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

The school has a clear vision and sense of direction. The headteacher has played a key role in shaping this high performing school committed to young people's achievement. He is well supported by his depute headteachers who have complementary skills and leadership qualities. Particularly strong leadership is given to the pastoral care of young people and those with additional support needs. The senior management team works well to encourage and manage improvements across the school. Principal teachers play a key role in maintaining high standards of achievement and improving the learning within their subject areas. Some principal teachers, and other teachers across the school, have taken a strong lead in developing new approaches to learning, including more cross-curricular learning. The school should continue to build on and extend the examples of very good practice across the school.

9. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The education authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its schools. We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- In the context of implementing Curriculum for Excellence, the school should continue to focus on the development of young people's skills for learning, skills for work, and skills for life.
- The school should work towards ensuring all young people have sufficient high-quality physical education in S3/S4.

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 North Berwick High School.

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

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

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

HM Inspector: Mairi Timmons

10 February 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