

**Dalkeith High School
Midlothian Council
12 June 2007**

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1. Background

Dalkeith High School was inspected in February and March 2007 as part of a national sample of secondary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the school's work at all stages. HM Inspectors evaluated how well the school was raising achievement for all pupils, taking into account the extent to which pupils' learning needs were met by the curriculum and teaching. They also analysed pupils' attainment in national examinations (see Appendix 3), the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement. HM Inspectors focused particularly on English, mathematics, modern languages, and chemistry and S1/S2 science.

The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

HM Inspectors observed teaching, learning and achievement in lessons and other contexts and examined pupils' work. They analysed responses to questionnaires¹ issued to a sample of parents² and pupils and to all staff. They interviewed groups of pupils, including representatives of pupil councils, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), and a group of parents.

Dalkeith High School is a non-denominational school serving the town of Dalkeith and its surrounding communities. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 808. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average. One hundred and fifty pupils from outwith the catchment area attended the school through placing requests. In October 2003, Dalkeith High School relocated to Dalkeith Schools' Community Campus, a joint campus accommodating three schools: Dalkeith High School, St David's RC High School and Saltersgate School.

¹ See Appendix 2

² Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The school's success in ensuring that all pupils leaving school entered employment, training or further or higher education.
- Pupils' achievements in sports, the arts and citizenship activities.
- The quality of care and welfare, achieved through highly effective integrated working.
- The contribution to pupils' learning made by the support for learning department.
- Relationships among pupils and staff, and partnerships with parents and the wider community.
- The leadership of the headteacher in improving the school.

3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?

To evaluate how well the school was raising achievement for all, HM Inspectors considered the extent to which the learning needs of all pupils were met through the curriculum and teaching. They evaluated the effectiveness of the school in promoting the learning and personal development of all pupils in lessons and in other, broader contexts. They also considered the standards attained in specific aspects of learning.

Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum was good. It was appropriately broad and balanced and nearly all pupils were able to progress in their chosen subjects. Particular features of the curriculum included the following.

- Overall, the school provided a broad range of subjects. While the curriculum at S3/S4 provided appropriate subject coverage, the time allocated to religious and moral education and physical education was insufficient. The school had considered how to increase it but had not as yet finalised any plans.
- In most curricular areas the school had effective links with associated primary schools, including a joint project promoting healthy eating.
- At S1/S2, pupils received an additional period of English and mathematics each week which was proving effective in improving their skills.
- The mathematics and modern languages departments offered both Standard Grades and National Qualifications at S3/S4, which helped to meet individual needs.

- The school had good links with the local college which enabled S3/S4 pupils to develop vocational skills.
- The school provided an extensive and progressive range of enterprise challenges from S1 to S6. During S5 induction in 2006, the challenge was to arrange a party for local senior citizens in 24 hours.
- Pupils followed a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) from S1 to S4. The S5/S6 course, although good, required further development to ensure progressive development of skills and attitudes and to maintain good progress made in earlier years.
- The careers and vocational education programme benefited from the input of local organisations and the careers adviser. It had major strengths and was proving successful in helping pupils to enter employment, training or further or higher education.
- Provision of Advanced Higher courses at S6 was limited.

Teaching and meeting pupils' needs

Overall, teaching had important strengths, with some areas for improvement. In most classrooms, teachers created positive learning environments, with good use of praise. They explained work clearly and made good use of questioning. Strategies to ensure that pupils understood what they were learning and how to improve were proving effective. Most teachers made good use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support teaching and to enrich learning. Pupils generally received regular and appropriate homework tasks. However, in a few lessons pupils received only limited opportunities to collaborate and be actively involved in their learning. A few teachers did not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils could achieve. Existing good practice needed to be better shared across departments and teachers.

The school demonstrated important strengths in meeting pupils' needs, with some areas for improvement. It had developed very effective learning support links with associated primary schools, which enabled early identification and support of pupils. A range of courses including vocational courses and National Qualifications at Access level, helped pupils to achieve their potential. Most teachers selected appropriate tasks and resources for the range of abilities in their classes. However, in some classes, teachers did not consistently meet pupils' needs effectively, particularly those of higher attaining pupils. The support for learning (SfL) department was working well with subject departments on approaches to meeting pupils' needs. The SfL team, including a very committed team of learning assistants, provided high levels of effective support for pupils with additional support needs. It provided good quality information and collaborated extensively with all staff to ensure that work in the SfL base and in class together met pupils' additional support needs. In-class support was well planned and effective and highly valued by pupils and class teachers. Literacy support programmes were successful in enabling groups of pupils to progress and to access the curriculum more readily. Well-established and purposeful links with the multi-agency Integration Team supported the department's work through focused group and individual work. Pupils looked after by the authority were very well supported. Statutory documentation was in place for pupils requiring care plans and appropriate processes had been set up to establish coordinated support plans.

Learning and personal development

Overall, the quality of learning was good. In almost all lessons, pupils worked purposefully. They were well motivated and answered well in class. The pace of lessons was generally appropriate and sometimes brisk. Pupils responded well to activities which encouraged interaction and collaboration. However, opportunities for expressing their own views and becoming independent learners varied across the school. The library resource centre made a positive contribution to pupils' learning but was not used sufficiently to develop pupils' active involvement and responsibility for learning.

The quality of pupils' personal and social development was very good. The programme for PSHE developed an appropriate range of skills which pupils understood to be important and relevant for their future lives. Most pupils participated fully in PSHE lessons and responded well to questions which encouraged them to think about themselves and others. The school's strong preparation of pupils for employment and training enabled them to develop effective skills for work and adult life. A range of enterprise activities across year groups encouraged good team-working and contributed to building individual self-confidence. An extensive extra-curricular programme, including sporting and musical activities, trips and residential stays, also made a very positive impact and helped pupils to develop positive attitudes and good social and other skills. Senior pupils were positive role models and carried out a range of responsibilities, including mentoring S1 pupils and organising events. The pupil council enabled pupils to be part of the decision-making process and to influence positively the life of the school. Pupils developed citizenship skills through a variety of means, including fundraising for charity and working on specific projects with pupils from the adjoining special school. The school now needed to help them to extend the confidence gained through these wider activities to aspects of their learning.

English

Teachers knew pupils well and gave good advice about improving their work. They did not always indicate clearly the purposes of lessons. Questioning was skilful. Pupils were actively involved and developed their ideas through collaborative activities. Spelling and punctuation were weak but improved as pupils progressed from S1 to S6. Groups of pupils engaged in public speaking and debating. Some achieved success in writing competitions.

Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and meeting needs was good. Attainment was adequate. Particular features included the following.

- At S1/S2, the majority of pupils attained appropriate national levels in listening, talking and reading, with increasing numbers exceeding them in reading. Less than half attained these levels in writing. Pupils made good progress in their coursework.
- At S3/S4, the proportion of pupils who attained a Credit or General award had improved and was above the national average in 2006. Overall, pupils performed less well in English than in their other subjects.

- At S5/S6, most pupils presented at Higher attained A-C awards. The proportion of pupils presented at Intermediate 1 or 2 levels who achieved A-C awards had fluctuated but in 2006 was well above national averages. In recent years, just under half of those entered for Advanced Higher had achieved awards.

Mathematics

Teachers used questioning well and included a wide variety of learning experiences in lessons. Most lessons were of high quality. Teachers made highly effective use of ICT to enhance learning and motivate pupils. Almost all pupils worked purposefully and often at a brisk pace. Most showed enthusiasm when answering questions, using interactive whiteboards and collaborating in group work. Teachers organised classes to quicken the pace of learning from S1 to S4. There was a high level of support for pupils experiencing learning difficulties.

Overall, the quality of teaching, learning, meeting pupils' needs and attainment was good. Particular features included the following.

- At S1/S2, the majority of S2 pupils attained appropriate national levels. The proportion attaining beyond these levels had improved in 2006.
- At S4, the proportion of pupils attaining an award at Intermediate 2 had shown steady improvement and was above the national average for this level. Success rates among pupils presented for external examinations in S3 were high.
- At S5/S6, the proportion of pupils gaining an award at Higher had improved to almost the national average in 2006. There was a high rate of success in individual units but too many pupils failed to gain an overall award in the external examination. The majority of candidates gained an A-C award at Intermediate 2 but only a minority did so at Intermediate 1 and Advanced Higher.

Modern languages

Teachers were well prepared, gave clear explanations and made good use of praise. Most pupils worked hard and responded well to the positive learning environment. There was scope for pupils to take more responsibility for their learning and to work and think more independently. In some classes, lessons were too teacher-led and the pace of learning was too slow. Higher attaining pupils needed greater challenge. Pupils developed their language skills well by participating in educational holidays and exchange trips to France.

The overall quality of teaching and meeting pupils' needs was good and learning was adequate. Attainment was good. Particular features included the following.

- At S1/S2, the majority of pupils were performing well in their coursework, with some good examples of extended writing.
- At S3/S4, pupils tended to perform better in French at Standard Grade than in their other subjects. The proportion gaining a Credit award in French had been above national averages in two of the last three years.

- In S5, pupils had performed significantly better in Higher French in 2006 than in their other subjects. In the last three years, almost all had gained an A-C award.

Chemistry and S1/S2 science

Teachers related lessons to pupils' everyday experience, provided clear explanations and, in some lessons, used ICT effectively. They interacted positively with pupils but did not share the purposes of lessons with them to focus their learning. Pupils worked well and cooperated effectively in groups, although they were sometimes too passive. Teachers knew pupils well and supported their learning but the pace was not always appropriate for individual needs. S1/S2 pupils needed more written feedback on how to improve their work. Staff and pupils had benefited from taking part in a local chemistry quiz.

Overall the quality of teaching and learning experiences was good. Meeting needs was adequate. Attainment was weak. Particular features included the following.

- At S1/S2, about half of pupils were performing well in their coursework.
- At S3/S4, the proportion of pupils achieving General or Credit awards at Standard Grade had improved but was still well below the national average.
- At S5/S6, the proportion of pupils attaining A-C awards at Higher level was well below the national average. Higher awards at A were in line with the national average. At Advanced Higher most pupils achieved A-C awards.

Attainment

Information about the subjects inspected has been given earlier in the report. Across the school, particular features of pupils' progress, results in examinations and other qualifications, including those awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)³ for the three year period 2004-2006, are included below.

By the end of S2 attainment was good. Particular features included the following.

- Pupils were making good progress across most of the inspected subjects and more broadly across the school.
- The majority of pupils attained appropriate national levels in reading and mathematics. Less than half attained these levels in writing. Attainment in these aspects had improved.

³ Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

By the end of S4, attainment was adequate. Particular features included the following.

- The proportions of pupils attaining English and mathematics at SCQF level 3, and five or more awards at SCQF levels 3 and 4 had improved and were above national averages. At levels 3 and 4 results were better than in similar schools. Proportions attaining five or more awards at SCQF level 5 had improved although they were still below national averages and similar schools.
- Pupils in S3/S4 following skills for work and other vocational courses were making good progress. The number of pupils leaving school to go into employment and training had increased.
- The proportion of pupils who gained a Credit award at Standard Grade was well above the national average in technological studies and above in graphic communication, but well below in art and design. Pupils' results in history were better, and in art and design notably poorer, than in their other subjects.

By the end of S6, attainment was adequate. Particular features included the following.

- The proportions of pupils attaining five or more awards at SCQF levels 4 or 5 were below national averages but in line with similar schools.
- The proportions of pupils attaining one, three or five awards at SCQF level 6 were below national averages and slightly below similar schools.
- The proportion of pupils attaining at least one award at SCQF level 7 had fluctuated and was below the national average and that of similar schools.
- At Intermediate 2, the proportion of pupils who gained an A-C grade was well below national averages in administration and business management. At Higher, the proportion of pupils who attained an A-C grade was well above the national average in biology, above in graphic communication and well below in art and design.
- No awards were well above the national average in administration at Higher.

4. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>Arrangements for pastoral care were excellent. Staff knew pupils very well and demonstrated very high levels of commitment to ensuring their safety and wellbeing. The school had clear guidelines for dealing with child protection, racial abuse and substance misuse, which it implemented effectively. A very good anti-bullying week reinforced the school's established approaches. The school was committed to promoting healthy lifestyles. Key staff collaborated with the Integration Team to provide high levels of effective support for the most vulnerable pupils. They identified support needs at an early stage to enable pupils to settle quickly at transition. Pupils felt safe and their concerns were addressed promptly. Guidance and SfL staff worked very closely together to provide all staff with regular advice. Learning assistants provided varied activities for pupils, including the most vulnerable, outwith class time. The school was successful in integrating a number of pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Arrangements for those requiring special assistance and for the administration of medicines were appropriate. The overall management and delivery of support for pupils was a model of best practice in ensuring an integrated approach to meeting pupils' needs.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>Accommodation was very good. Particular features included the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shared canteen and other social areas provided valuable opportunities for pupils to make friends with those attending other schools on the joint campus. • The accommodation was very well looked after by pupils, and was well maintained by staff responsible for facilities management and cleaning. • The school had appropriate arrangements for security. • Disabled people had very good access throughout the school.

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The school had a very positive climate. All members of the school community had a strong sense of pride in their school and morale was high. Pupils generally behaved well, and any poor behaviour was dealt with effectively. Appropriate use of praise, an effective merit system and achievement ceremonies encouraged pupils to succeed. Pupils needed further help to channel the confidence developed through wider activities into achievement within the classroom. The school was successful in developing a sense of equality and fairness and in ensuring that all pupils were included. Staff had received training on race equality but the policy was not yet finalised. Opportunities for religious observance were not yet sufficient, but were being extended.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The quality of partnership with parents and the community was very good. Particular features included the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School Board and PTA provided very strong support for the work of the school. • Pupils had developed an award-winning garden with pupils from Saltersgate School. Pupils from all three schools were working on a joint project, supported by a charitable foundation. There was scope for more joint working within the formal curriculum. • The school had very good curricular links with local colleges. • Parents received helpful and informative written reports on their children's progress and very well-produced newsletters which included information from the catering team. • The school was developing plans to improve the timing of the S1 parents' night to take account of their concerns. • The school's strong health-promoting schools group included representation from pupils and parents as well as school and catering staff.

5. Leading and improving the school

The school provided an effective education which successfully raised the achievement of all pupils. It presented worthwhile vocational pathways for pupils and opportunities for them to succeed across a wide range of contexts. All pupils leaving school entered employment, training or further or higher education. Staff morale was high and the very positive relationships within the school provided a good foundation for improving learning. Pupils'

needs were well met overall. The school now needed to ensure consistency in classroom practice and to focus on improving pupils' confidence and independence in learning.

The leadership of the headteacher had major strengths. The headteacher had successfully established the school on Scotland's first joint campus. With other leaders, she had been instrumental in developing key partnerships with other schools and with agencies and community groups. These partnerships helped pupils to achieve widely and develop important skills. They also prepared them for life after school. Pupils' behaviour, the overall ethos of the school and its standing in the community had improved. Aspects of attainment were also beginning to improve. After a period of transition, the senior management team was now fully in place, was well respected within the school and was working effectively as a team. Most principal teachers led effectively and some provided strong leadership.

Self-evaluation was adequate. The headteacher had a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and had been successful in bringing about planned improvements through actively involving staff. Pupils' views were also listened to. Parents' views were not gathered systematically across the range of the school's work. The school monitored pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance and could account for their destinations. To improve classroom practice and attainment, senior and middle managers needed to extend their knowledge of pupils' learning experiences in order to promote the sharing of best practice and identify areas for improvement.

As well as building on the strengths and addressing the issues raised throughout this report, the school and the education authority should address the following main points for action.

Main points for action

The school should take steps to improve attainment by:

- implementing more systematic approaches to evaluating and improving pupils' learning and progress; and
- reviewing the curriculum to ensure that the programmes of pupils in S3/S4 made appropriate provision for religious and moral and physical education.

What happens next?

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Elisabeth Morris
HM Inspector

12 June 2007

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The following quality indicators have been used in the inspection process to contribute to the evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school in promoting learning and achievement for all pupils.

Section 3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?	
Structure of the curriculum	good
The teaching process	good
Meeting pupils' needs	good
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Personal and social development	very good
Overall quality of attainment: S1/S2	good
Overall quality of attainment: S3/S4	adequate
Overall quality of attainment: S5/S6	adequate

Section 4. How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	excellent
Accommodation and facilities	very good
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	good
Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community	very good

Section 5. Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	very good
Leadership across the school	good
Self-evaluation	adequate

This report uses the following word scale to make clear the judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

The following provides a summary of questionnaire responses. Key issues from the questionnaires have been considered in the inspection and comments are included as appropriate throughout the report.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<p>Over half of parents responded to the questionnaire. They were very positive about almost all aspects of the work of the school. In particular they thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children enjoyed school, the school had a good reputation and teachers set high standards; • reports were helpful and staff were welcoming; • the building was kept in good order; • their children were treated fairly and indiscipline was dealt with effectively; and • staff showed care and concern for their children and the school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents had no major concerns. • A few would like changes to the timing of parents' evenings. • Limited access to school transport was also a concern for a small number.

What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<p>Almost all pupils responded to the questionnaire. Their views were overwhelmingly positive. They thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they enjoyed school and teachers explained things clearly; • they felt safe and secure, and believed that staff were good at dealing with bullying; • teachers listened to what they said and they were able to influence what happened in the school; • they knew what to do if they were worried and were confident that the school would help to sort it out; and • teachers expected them to work to the best of their ability and helped them to improve their learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils had no significant concerns.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<p>Almost all staff responded to the questionnaire. They were very positive about almost all aspects of the work of the school. In particular, they thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • senior managers worked well as a team and communicated effectively with staff; and • the school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A third of auxiliary staff thought that their staff training time could be used more effectively.

Appendix 3 Attainment in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 Cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

Percentage of relevant S4 roll attaining by end of S4

		2004	2005	2006
<i>English and Mathematics</i> <i>@ Level 3</i>	Dalkeith High School	91	91	95
	Comparator schools ⁴	91	92	93
	National	91	90	91
<i>5+ @ Level 3 or better</i>	Dalkeith High School	88	91	95
	Comparator schools	90	89	89
	National	91	90	91
<i>5+ @ Level 4 or better</i>	Dalkeith High School	74	72	85
	Comparator schools	74	74	78
	National	77	76	77
<i>5+ @ Level 5 or better</i>	Dalkeith High School	26	28	30
	Comparator schools	31	31	31
	National	35	34	35

Percentage of relevant S4 roll attaining by end of S5

		2004	2005	2006
<i>5+ @ Level 4 or better</i>	Dalkeith High School	76	74	74
	Comparator schools ⁴	77	75	77
	National	78	78	78
<i>5+ @ Level 5 or better</i>	Dalkeith High School	36	37	41
	Comparator schools	41	41	40
	National	45	45	45
<i>1+ @ Level 6 or better</i>	Dalkeith High School	30	29	32
	Comparator schools	36	36	36
	National	39	39	38
<i>3+ @ Level 6 or better</i>	Dalkeith High School	17	13	16
	Comparator schools	19	19	20
	National	23	23	22
<i>5+ @ Level 6 or better</i>	Dalkeith High School	6	3	5
	Comparator schools	7	7	7
	National	9	10	10

Percentage of relevant S4 roll attaining by end of S6

		2004	2005	2006
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Dalkeith High School	45	38	40
	Comparator schools⁴	41	42	43
	National	47	47	48
1+ @ Level 6 or better	Dalkeith High School	38	32	37
	Comparator schools	41	41	39
	National	44	43	43
3+ @ Level 6 or better	Dalkeith High School	23	22	23
	Comparator schools	28	27	25
	National	31	30	30
5+ @ Level 6 or better	Dalkeith High School	13	12	11
	Comparator schools	17	16	16
	National	20	19	20
1+ @ Level 7 or better	Dalkeith High School	5	8	4
	Comparator schools	11	9	11
	National	12	12	13

⁴ Comparator schools are the 20 schools statistically closest to the school being inspected in terms of the key characteristics of the school population.

How can you contact us?

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