

11 February 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Trinity Academy
The City of Edinburgh 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 "assertive mentoring", interdisciplinary learning and opportunities for personal achievement, including through international work. 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?

Overall, most young people enjoy learning at school and value the range of experiences that help them develop skills for learning, life and work. Relationships in classes are positive and young people feel well supported in their learning. They appreciate the commitment and willingness demonstrated by teachers in offering additional learning opportunities, for example through Trinity Achieves. Where learning is best, young people are actively engaged in their tasks, taking responsibility, and working collaboratively with peers. In some lessons, teachers give young people the opportunity to develop the skills to evaluate their own and each other's work against clear criteria. In a number of departments, young people receive helpful feedback on their learning and this helps them to identify their strengths and areas that they need to develop further. This good practice is building young people's skills as independent learners. There is scope for young people's learning experiences to be of a more consistently high quality across the school.

The school offers a commendable range of learning experiences beyond the classroom. A majority of young people benefit from opportunities provided by the school to achieve high standards across areas of sport, creative arts, citizenship and preparation for work. The school has a wide programme of sports in which young people extend their individual and teamwork performance. Many young people participate in the successful rugby and hockey teams. The teams also used their enterprising skills to raise money to support tours to South Africa and Canada. Many young people demonstrate very good interpersonal skills and have developed their confidence through a range of activities in the local and wider community, including international experiences. As well as local work placements, there are opportunities to

undertake work placements in European countries. This widens young people's horizons for future employment opportunities. A few young people very recently represented the United Kingdom at the Euroscola Conference in Strasbourg. The school's work in international education has been recognised by the British Council awarding Trinity Academy the "International School Award". Many young people perform in music events and enjoyed recent success in performing in the successful Christmas Show. Across the school, young people have a strong commitment to raising significant funds for local and international charities including Lothian SANDS and a school for AIDS orphans in Tanzania. Staff should continue to develop approaches to gathering information about young people's achievements and ensure that all young people have planned opportunities to achieve in an appropriate range of contexts.

The school needs to develop a consistent approach to the collation of information on the progress and attainment of young people from S1 to S3 across all their subjects. There is no overall trend of improvement in the school's performance in external examinations. Across most national measures, the school performs less well than schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. Assertive mentoring is helping to raise attainment in some measures by the end of S4. The school now needs to take steps to improve attainment from S4 to S6.

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

In the majority of lessons we observed, tasks and activities were well matched to the needs of most learners. In some classes, teachers' expectations are suitably high and young people are encouraged and challenged to do their best. In other lessons, learning requires to be matched more closely to young people's needs to ensure greater learner involvement and better progress. Teachers should share with young people consistently higher expectations of what they can achieve. Pastoral staff support young people very effectively. They work very well with other agencies, such as Skills Development Scotland, to improve outcomes for young people. Young people are very well informed about healthy lifestyles and understand their responsibilities for decisions which affect their wellbeing. Arrangements to identify young people requiring additional support ensure all staff are knowledgeable about the learning needs of pupils in their classes. Young people with additional support needs are well supported through targeted work by support for learning teachers and pupil support assistants. This work helps these young people make significant progress in important aspects of their learning. Regular meetings of the Pupil Support Group ensure that an appropriate range of partner agencies are involved in supporting young people to ensure they make suitable progress.

Overall, the school has planned the curriculum to provide a broad and progressive learning experience for young people. Staff from local primary schools and Trinity Academy have worked well together in developing approaches to support young people as they move from primary school. Across S1 to S3, teachers have developed courses taking good account of Curriculum for Excellence guidance. Interdisciplinary learning helps young people make connections in their learning. The curriculum from S4 to S6 provides an appropriate range of options which meets the varied needs of young people. This includes courses at Edinburgh College and work with a range of partner organisations including community learning and development and local

businesses. The school is continuing to develop the curriculum and needs to ensure that all courses provide appropriate challenge and progression for young people to achieve as highly as possible.

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

The school has a range of approaches to evaluate the quality of its work. Almost all staff are involved in working groups to take forward aspects of school improvement. Teachers' continuing professional learning supports improvements to learning and teaching and staff share their new skills and knowledge well. The school seeks the views of young people and parents to inform improvements but needs to communicate more effectively the actions taken as a result of these views. Senior managers and curriculum leaders observe lessons and provide helpful feedback to teachers. They now need to collate findings and work with staff to ensure a shared understanding of key strengths and aspects for improvement.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Capable, confident and courteous young people who enjoy positive relationships with staff and each other.
- The wide range of opportunities for young people, including international experiences, to develop skills for life and work.
- The quality of pastoral support provided for young people.

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

- Further develop the use of self-evaluation evidence to focus on improvements which will have the greatest impact on raising attainment.
- Continue to improve approaches to learning and teaching to provide all young people with appropriately challenging learning activities.
- Continue to develop the curriculum to ensure that all young people can progress in their learning and achieve as highly as possible.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will discuss with the City of Edinburgh Council, the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to the school within 18 months of the date of this letter to consider how the school has improved. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent of these improvements.

Carol McDonald
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/TrinityAcademyEdinburghCity.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 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.