



**Fettes College
Edinburgh
28 April 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. We describe how children and 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 parents² and services which support children and young people. We also comment on how well staff, children and young people work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report also describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well children and 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.

¹ The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the preparatory and senior departments.

² Throughout this report, the term ‘parents’ should be taken to include foster carers, and carers who are relatives or friends.

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1. The school

Fettes College is a non-denominational independent school. It serves a wide geographical area in Scotland and abroad. HMIE inspected the school in March 2009. At the time of inspection the roll was 654, with 154 in the preparatory school and 500 in the senior school. The integrated inspection of the residential accommodation by HMIE and the Care Commission took place at the same time. The boarding roll across ten houses was 429.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Highly motivated children and young people who take part fully in the life of the school and boarding houses.
- High achievements of children and young people.
- The wide range of learning opportunities offered across the school and boarding houses.
- Communication and teamwork among class teachers, tutors and house staff, and their support for all aspects of children's and young people's learning.
- The very high levels of staff participation across all areas of school life.
- Outstanding leadership by the headmaster for all aspects of learning. Strong support given by the headmaster of the preparatory school and all senior members of staff.

3. Examples of good practice

- Young people engaged in shaping their learning in history.
- Planning learning opportunities within and beyond the school day.
- Tracking and monitoring all aspects of children's and young people's achievements and wellbeing.

4. How well do children and young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Throughout the school and boarding houses, children and young people are very keen to learn and take part in all activities. They share strong relationships with teachers and each other, and try their best to achieve in all that they do. Children and young people share their views about their learning with members of staff. They are very clear about how to improve their work and use advice from teachers, tutors and house staff well. In almost all classes, challenging activities help children and young people to learn to think for themselves and increase their confidence, building positive attitudes to learning. These attitudes are developed further by house staff in the boarding houses. Across the school and boarding houses, the many opportunities to work in teams help children and young people to be responsible towards each other, particularly in the preparatory school.

Across the school, children and young people use their skills to contribute very effectively to the school and the local and wider community. Through their enterprising attitudes, they have helped local elderly people with gardening, tidied local beaches and supported children living in Uganda. Participation in these and many other activities, organised across the school and boarding houses, including the extensive range of residential trips in Britain and abroad, has developed outstanding personal and social skills. Children and young people show leadership qualities as house prefects, members of the preparatory school, pupil council and heads of house. They also work alongside house staff to help organise many evening and weekend activities. Young people in the senior school successfully develop a wider range of skills by participating in the Combined Cadet Force. House staff and tutors monitor the development of the skills children and young people are acquiring across their experiences. This leads to well-focused discussions on how to develop further.

Children and young people achieve highly. The majority achieve well in musical examinations. Almost all achieve very well in other artistic and cultural activities and in an exceptionally wide range of sports. The elite athletes programme helps young people to achieve at the very highest level, including one hoping to take part in the Olympic Games. Each year, a commendable number of young people in the senior school achieve the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at gold level.

The preparatory school has maintained very high standards of attainment. Almost all children make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Almost all listen very carefully to the teacher and offer thoughtful comments to help take discussions further. They read widely and write very well for a wide range of purposes. In mathematics, children use numbers and money very effectively. They are particularly confident when making mental calculations and solving problems. They apply their literacy and numeracy skills extremely well in all areas of study. Children in the First and Second Forms make very good progress across their subjects. In the Third Form, young people continue to make very good progress and deepen their understanding of their subjects. Young people in the Fourth to Sixth Forms perform exceptionally well in national and international examinations. Almost all young people go on to study at university. Across the school, children and young people with difficulties in their learning are making very good progress overall.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

At all stages, children study a commendable range of topics and courses to make sure they receive a broad general education. This includes the very effectively planned and coordinated range of experiences across the day, evening and weekend, organised by house staff. Very careful planning by house staff, tutors, preparatory and senior school staff helps young people to maintain very good levels of progress. In the preparatory school, children take an active part in challenging, relevant and enjoyable activities. The introduction of the International Baccalaureate at Lower and Upper Sixth Forms has helped to broaden further the range of experiences offered to

young people. The planned activities to develop children's and young people's skills in citizenship, health and wellbeing, enterprise and literacy and numeracy are excellent. Through the range of academic studies, games and boarding house activities, the needs and interests of almost all children and young people are very well met. A great deal of learning in the classroom is followed up and supported by opportunities to learn outside the classroom. The range and quality of sporting opportunities offered by the school is outstanding.

Staff across the school and boarding houses know children and young people very well and understand their academic, social, emotional and physical needs. Almost all teachers provide suitably demanding tasks and take great care to ensure children and young people make the best progress. Teachers ask open and searching questions which helps children and young people to explore ideas and discuss their own thoughts with each other. This is a particular feature in the preparatory school. The librarian uses innovative and effective ways to encourage children and young people to use the library to support their learning. The very effective teamwork and communication among all staff ensures that children and young people receive outstanding support for all aspects of their learning. Across the school and boarding houses, help for children and young people with additional needs is arranged very carefully and effectively.

5. How well do staff work with others to support the learning of children and young people?

The school has a range of very effective partnerships with parents, former pupils and other providers in the local, national and international communities. Staff work in imaginative ways with partners to enhance the quality and number of learning opportunities available to children and young people in the school and boarding houses. They use technology very effectively to help parents support their children's and young people's learning, for example house staff e-mail parents about progress made. A large number of academic and sporting visitors broaden many experiences and challenge children

and young people to think deeply about difficult issues. The house staff work very effectively with many agencies to support the social, emotional and health needs of children and young people. Strong partnerships enhance the advice offered to young people on areas such as careers, sexual health and independent living. The school also has good links to support young people's mental health and wellbeing.

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

Children and young people have a large say in how the boarding houses and school can be improved. They feel that discussions with tutors and house staff help to improve their learning. Roles such as buddies and membership of committees help children and young people to make a valuable contribution to improving the school. Members of the Board of Governors visit the school and boarding houses regularly. They spend time with the children and young people looking for ways to improve the school further. Issues and concerns are taken forward by the audit committee. The school gathers the views of children and young people, parents and staff through discussion, letters and surveys. It uses their views to inform how the school can be improved. The school responds very well to the few complaints raised by children and young people, parents and members of the local community. Senior managers observe learning and teaching and most heads of department encourage their staff to share good practice. A few teachers share good practice between the preparatory school and senior school. The headmaster sets high expectations for the analysis of examinations and these are discussed, reported on rigorously and improvements are linked to suitable action plans. Various review groups continue to improve aspects of the work of the school. For example, the tutor review group, led by a head of department, is improving further the work of all tutors in the school. Also, the food review group is taking forward the provision of food in the school.

House staff and young people are committed to being reflective and they put forward their views and suggestions for improvement in the school and houses. This leads to continuous improvement in young people's experiences, particularly in the boarding houses.

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

Staff, children and young people work together very well to create a strong ethos of achievement, while learning respect and caring for others. Across the school, children, young people and staff are encouraged to push themselves to achieve their very best. The behaviour of almost all children and young people is exemplary. The morning chapel helps to set the daily expectation of what young people can achieve in school and during their lives. Time in chapel is also used to celebrate a range of successes and this is supported by celebrations in the boarding houses. Children and young people enjoy learning from each other about different cultures and develop a clear understanding about how to treat people equally. Across the school and boarding houses, staff are very clear about their responsibilities for child protection. The school sets the highest expectations of success in everything children and young people attempt. Children and young people have a very strong sense of pride in the school and are determined to ensure its reputation for excellence continues.

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

The school's aims, values and traditions are at the centre of all it does. Staff reflect carefully and work together and alongside children and young people to improve aspects of the school's work. They are very well led in this by the outstanding headmaster. He has a comprehensive and clear vision to develop well-rounded, confident and thoughtful individuals. He is very ably supported by the headmaster of the preparatory school and other senior staff. The Board of Governors plays a key role in ensuring the school offers the

highest quality education. It works closely with the headmaster to support new developments and continue to improve the school. House staff reflect carefully on the work of the boarding houses. Teachers, tutors and house staff lead in a variety of ways to continuously develop and improve teaching, learning and the care and support offered to children and young people.

9. What happens next?

As a result of the excellent quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits following this inspection. The Board of Governors will inform parents about the school's progress as part of their arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of the school.

We have agreed the following area for improvement with the school and Board of Governors.

- Continue to develop opportunities to spread the most effective practice in teaching and learning across the whole school.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the boarding houses there was one recommendation which has since received appropriate action in the agreed timescale.

Quality indicators help schools and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a school. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publications *How good is our school?*

Here are the evaluations for Fettes College

Improvements in performance	excellent
Learners' experiences	excellent
Meeting learning needs	excellent

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

The curriculum	excellent
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

HM Inspector: David Gregory
28 April 2009

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If you wish to comment about any of our inspections, contact us at HMIEenquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk or alternatively you should write in the first instance to BMCT, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Our complaints procedure is available from our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can write to our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259 or the Complaints Coordinator, Headquarters, Care Commission, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330, fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website at www.spsso.org.uk.

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

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