



QUALITY DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL REVIEW

# WESTER HAILES EDUCATION CENTRE

MARCH 2007

•EDINBURGH•  
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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## THE SCHOOL IN CONTEXT

Wester Hailes Education Centre is a non denominational secondary school built in 1978 and serves the area of south west Edinburgh. It draws most of its pupils from Canal View, Clovenstone, Sighthill and Westburn primary schools. The catchment area comprises peripheral housing estates and has the third highest level of free meal entitlements in the city. In addition to its school function, the centre provides a complex range of leisure and recreation, youth work and adult education services to the community in which it sits.

The school building is generally in good condition. Useful upgrading of information technology (IT) rooms has recently been completed. There is a good programme to help maintain structure and appearance.

The current school roll is 439. Four non-district requests were made for places in S1 and 61 district pupils enrolled in other authority schools. The resulting S1 roll was 66.

Absence rates for 2005–2006 were 52 half days per pupil. This compares with the authority average of 37 and the national average of 36. There were 93 formal exclusions during 2005–2006.

The pupil: teacher ratio is 8:1.

The senior management team (SMT) consists of the headteacher (HT), three depute headteachers (DHTs), one acting depute headteacher and the centre manager. In addition, 94 support staff are allocated to a range of whole-centre responsibilities. Senior staff and almost all members of the teaching staff have taken part in the authority's professional review scheme. All support staff will have entered the performance review and development scheme by June 2007.

The pupil unit cost for 2005–2006 was £5889, compared to authority and national averages of £4304 and £4367 respectively. Both the pupil: teacher ratio and the pupil unit costs however, include the teacher allocations to the centre's community programme. There is a School Board.

## PUPIL ATTAINMENT

The use of national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics is fully established. The school's current performance in relation to national 5-14 attainment targets is:

	2004	2005	2006
Reading	38%	23%	38%
Writing	14%	1%	17%
Mathematics	26%	19%	33%

The school's performance in relation to national attainment targets was as follows:

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Key:

Level 7:	Advanced Higher A-C
Level 6:	Higher at A-C
Level 5:	Intermediate A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2
Level 4:	Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4
Level 3:	Access 3 Cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

	'00-'02	'01-'03	'02-'04	'03-'05	'04-'06
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained SCQF level 3 or better both English and Mathematics	78%	71%	73%	69%	79%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 5 or more awards at SCQF level 3 or better	71%	71%	67%	72%	75%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 5 or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better	34%	36%	39%	41%	45%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better	9%	10%	11%	9%	11%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 1 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better	14%	12%	11%	8%	9%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 3 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better	4%	4%	3%	2%	3%
% of the original S4 cohort who, by the end of S6, have attained 5 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%

During 2005-2006, 45 pupils, of whom one has provision within a Record of Needs, were referred to psychological services.

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## REVIEW PROCEDURES

Wester Hailes Education Centre was reviewed by a team from the Quality Development and Neighbourhood Management Groups of the Children and Families Department during November 2006. The review was based on the school's own S&Q report for session 2005–2006.

The review programme, based on the standards and quality (S&Q) report 2005–2006 comprised two key areas:

- ✿ curriculum;
- ✿ learning and teaching;

plus the authority theme:

- ✿ continuity and progression in learning including transitions.

The review team considered statements made by the school about two key areas based on the S&Q report, along with the authority theme, and made their evaluation on the basis of their own observations and evidence provided by the school. The results of their findings are given below as a commentary on the school's report.

In order to make their evaluation, the team consulted a number of documents including the school improvement plan, interviewed samples of pupils, staff and parents, and observed learning and teaching. In total, 34 lessons were observed. A questionnaire was issued to a sample of parents.

Eighty eight questionnaires were sent to parents. No further questionnaires were requested and 11 were returned.

### PARENTS'/CARERS' VIEWS

Almost all agreed that their child enjoyed being at school, was encouraged to work to the best of his/her ability, and teachers knew their child as an individual, treated him/her fairly and helped him/her when in difficulty. Almost all agreed

that the school was well led, that teachers dealt effectively with bad behaviour and that parent teacher meetings were helpful.

Most agreed that the school had a good reputation in the community and that they received regular helpful information about their child's progress.

The majority were satisfied with the homework their child received, the school's explanation of its work and the part parents could play in their child's education.

## FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

### 1 CURRICULUM

The review team agreed with following statements from the school's S&Q report:

- ✿ There is an increasing permeation of citizenship, IT and enterprise throughout the curriculum.
- ✿ There is a wide range of programmes and subjects in the traditional middle school years (S3–S4) and now in S2–S3 where breadth and balance are very good and progress and continuity maintained.
- ✿ There is an increasing level of choice in S4–S6.

Overall the quality of the curriculum was good with some very good aspects.

### Strengths in curriculum

Wester Hailes Education Centre was at the heart its local community and all staff showed a commendable commitment to ensuring that the school contributed to and benefited from the strong community links. This partnership was reflected in the ethos of inclusion and respect and the rich range of opportunities provided for pupils. The school had been recently successful in its application for The Quality Standard Award which validated many of the aims and values of the centre.

There was good planning for the changes to the curriculum introduced in 2006 which took account of curriculum flexibility and the age and stage relaxation in presentations for national examinations. The school's SMT thoroughly researched models in place in other schools. After presentations to staff a preferred model was agreed which offered the potential for more choice in the senior school and best suited the needs of all pupils. Staff were given time to review current arrangements in their departments, prepare new learning resources and implement the new curriculum. Commendably, when the final curriculum model was agreed all staff were committed to making it work. Good monitoring and evaluation plans were in place to measure the impact of the new options.

The school was to be commended on its commitment and enthusiasm for curricular flexibility as a means to increase engagement, personalisation and choice for all students. The school's recent inclusion in the 20:20 project had supported these changes and encouraged further development of a flexible curriculum with enhanced vocational elements.

There were a number of strategies and plans in place to help ensure effective management and delivery of the curriculum including:

- ✿ the very high quality school standards and quality report which was full and detailed and which helped ensure continuity and progression and coherent curriculum development across the school;
- ✿ good action plans that linked priorities between school plans, individual subjects and support for learning;
- ✿ in-depth departmental reviews carried out by the SMT which often enlisted support from appropriate staff from other schools; and
- ✿ an effective timetabling and course choice options structure.

Teachers worked hard to reconstruct S1 courses to ensure effective articulation with the work covered in the primary school and to adapt work previously delivered over a two year period.

All S2 students interviewed were extremely positive and motivated by starting Standard Grade or equivalent courses in S2. The courses motivated them and helped develop a wide range of skills and knowledge directly relating to the world of work. Senior pupils were positive about the wider opportunities they had experienced in the school, which had increased their confidence and prepared them for the next steps after school.

Commendably, the SMT and the curriculum working group had adopted a proactive approach to curriculum flexibility and sought to address the longer term timetabling and other issues for departments of increasing levels of choice in S4-S6. For example, the departmental timetable planning proforma for 2007-2008 identified longer term issues for departments arising from the removal of age and stage restrictions, prompting them to consider these in their forward planning.

Personal and social capabilities including aspects of enterprise, citizenship, eco schools and other cross-curricular aspects permeated the curriculum and made a very positive contribution to the ethos of the school. This was clearly in evidence by the whole school commitment to 'Children in Need' where staff organised a range of exciting events to coincide with the national charity campaign. Pupils were motivated, enthusiastic and demonstrated a sense of pride in their school for the part the school had played in this fundraising event. Other cross-curricular strategies, such as leadership development, were promoted through the 20:20 project.

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Progression from school to work or further and higher education was well supported through appropriate curricular progression and links with employers, Careers Scotland, colleges and universities. A range of very good vocational courses had been introduced, some based on the 20:20 project, which included:

- ✿ a motor vehicle course delivered in partnership with Stevenson College;
- ✿ a Skills for Work Early Education and Childcare Course delivered in partnership with St George's School and the Rainbow Crèche;
- ✿ a financial education Skills for Work course delivered in partnership with Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBoS);
- ✿ certificated work experience; and
- ✿ Community Sports Leadership.

Parents and pupils spoke very highly of the well planned and well managed work experience and associated personal and social education (PSE) programmes. Other very good opportunities for pupils included: 'Bright Sparks', introduced through the Community Education department which used a range of approaches to engage able learners; the senior pupils' buddy programmes and links with Calderglen Nursery School; and an innovative S5 mathematics course with a life skills context.

### Areas for development in curriculum

As part of the schools curriculum flexibility strategy continue to monitor and audit curricular provision and progression.

Continue to develop appropriate courses for all pupils through the introduction of further choice at Access and Intermediate levels.

Review timetabling arrangements to ensure that appropriate time allocations are made for all subjects and at all stages.

Further develop cross sector working/transition initiatives to involve a wider range of subjects.

Increase the engagement of pupils and parents in the further development of the curriculum and of learning and teaching policies.

## 2 LEARNING AND TEACHING

The review team agreed with the following statements from the school's S&Q report:

- ✿ The range and appropriateness of teaching approaches is good and in some cases very good.
- ✿ Teacher-pupil interaction is good and in some cases very good.
- ✿ The identification of learning needs is good and in some cases very good.
- ✿ Information given to parents about students' progress is good and very good in some cases.
- ✿ A very good whole school learning and teaching template has been adopted by most departments.

Overall the quality of learning and teaching was good with some very good aspects.

### Strengths in learning and teaching

There was a very good policy-making process for learning and teaching and in which all departments had been involved. An associated learning and teaching template provided a very good structure and was effectively used by most departments. The programme of sharing classroom experience was making good progress.

Teachers received comprehensive and helpful guidance on courses and programmes of work, learning and teaching, support for pupils and assessment and recording. Excellent guidelines had been produced to help staff prepare departmental standards and quality reports, action plans and processes for evaluating the quality of learning and teaching across the school.

There were some very good processes in place to identify and share good practice among teachers. Commendably a dedicated continuing professional development (CPD) session had been held in August 2006 and a very good booklet, Raising Attainment: good practice in departments in Wester Hailes Education Centre had been produced.

Teaching approaches in many departments were well matched to pupils' learning needs and preferred styles of learning and in some departments homework was well planned. Lessons observed were generally very good. Lesson aims were shared and outcomes met. Paired work in some subjects enabled a mixed ability approach and supported students well. There was a growing focus on developing pupils' independent learning skills.

Most learning environments were stimulating and pupils were motivated to work well and enthusiastically often without close supervision. Pupils clearly valued the staff commitment to them and this was reflected in their very good behaviour and application.

The quality of departmental planning in support for learning (SfL) was good and ensured consistency of approach for support across the school. The SfL action plan had clear links with subject departments including the library. Individual departments made very good use of the library to support learning in their departments.

SfL staff made a very positive contribution to supporting the teaching staff to improve learning and teaching. There was a strong focus on pupils being supported in class and very good relationships between subject teachers and support for learning/guidance staff had been established. Learning assistants made a very positive contribution to supporting individual and groups of pupils.

The support team fulfilled a range of roles to support pupils' learning including cooperative teaching, curriculum development to support departments with differentiation and appropriate courses. This included individual homework programmes, in class programmes and extraction programmes for pupils in S3/S4. A clear programme of skill development had been put in place for pupils in S3/S4 with additional support for pupils in communication and numeracy skills.

Setting was well established from the beginning of S1 in English and mathematics and monitoring and evaluation processes were robust. This allowed pupils to transfer between sets where required.

Departmental evaluation and consultation was evident in most departments but notably in English, languages, music, physical education (PE), art and history and where evaluation of courses was a feature. Many had focused attainment files which were shared with students and some had developed very good formative assessment approaches. Music, art, drama, languages and history all had comprehensive recording systems in place.

Tracking of attainment and progress by both students and staff was effective in most departments. Profiling was also well established in some departments.

The presentation of information in reports to parents was of a high quality. The reports were in a helpful format, providing clear information and details of pupil progress across all aspects of the curriculum, including personal and social development.

At Standard Grade the flexible cooperative teaching approach in French had very effectively promoted independent learning by students. Also in French, active learning approaches supported a very high level of engagement and

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motivation from P6–S2. In several subjects the use of real life contexts and effective linking with students' own experiences had also promoted engagement.

Staff were increasingly using IT to deliver effective learning and teaching and this was seen in a number of subjects including PE, languages, social subjects, craft design and technology (CDT) and English. In the senior school higher order questioning was used effectively in some subjects.

All Wester Hailes Education Centre staff commended the community resources. These strengthened curriculum and learning and teaching opportunities at all ages and stages in the school.

### Areas for development in learning and teaching

The good start made in developing learning and teaching strategies should be continued to develop a consistent range of approaches. This should include increased collaborative work for learning, peer and self-evaluation, appropriate pace and challenge for all of the most able, use of homework, study clubs, use of ICT and the use of a wider range of questioning techniques and independent learning.

The school should build on the current very good practice in primary school liaison to take further account of learning and teaching approaches and the content of some subject areas.

The school should further develop staff expertise in analysing and using attainment data to inform strategies for effective coursing and learning and teaching approaches.

The school should extend and further establish consistent and systematic approaches to monitoring the department review process, self-evaluation using quality indicators and sharing classroom practice.

### 3 CONTINUITY AND PROGRESSION IN LEARNING INCLUDING TRANSITIONS

The review team agreed with the following statements from the school's S&Q report:

- ✿ The quality of information and advice on curricular and vocational guidance is very good.
- ✿ Preparation for choice in education, training and employment is good and improving.
- ✿ Action planning is good.
- ✿ Links with voluntary and statutory organisations, the wider community and employers are excellent.

Overall the quality of continuity and progression including transitions was good with some very good aspects.

### Strengths in continuity and progression in learning including transitions

There was very effective transfer of information from the primary schools about pupils which included details of curriculum, attainment and pastoral aspects. Clear and helpful information about pupils' learning needs was exchanged at appropriate times and many very good programmes were now well established to ensure progress.

There was very good cluster working. Primary schools were well informed about the plans for the age and stage revision and the impact on P7/S1 transition. There were a number of good programmes across a range of areas including Assessment is for Learning, language, mathematics, French, PE, science, art, music and eco schools – all of which effectively delivered continuity and progression in learning. These programmes helped ensure consistency across the cluster in terms of the high quality learning and very successfully supported transition to S1. In French for example, members of the department delivered the P6 and P7 French courses in all of the associated primary

schools. Other successful cluster initiatives included the integrated work of the artist in residence which was an excellent example of cross range working involving a community group and all P7 pupils in creating an impressive tile mural.

Support for students during and after primary transition was excellent. Transition programmes highlighted learning needs and Wester Hailes Education Centre staff were informed of learning styles of particular students entering S1 and ongoing support was in place.

All primary headteachers agreed that staff at Wester Hailes Education Centre were totally committed to students and their achievement and attainment.

External Services and the Working Together Team provided effective support for vulnerable pupils transferring to Wester Hailes Education Centre. Regular reviews and discussion featured at all stages.

There were very good records of pupil progress in some subject areas. Pupils' progress was recorded and tracked systematically in some departments and the information used to inform next steps. In some subjects pupils had opportunities to evaluate their own progress. There was effective communication of information about pupils' achievements between senior managers, subject teachers, Sfl staff, staff with guidance responsibilities and parents. It was commendable that plans had progressed well to record pupils' projected and actual performance which would include a useful profile of individual pupils' aptitudes, progress and attainment.

Support for pupils' had some very good aspects. In PSE, S1 pupils were given opportunities to develop skills in decision-making and choices in preparation for the course choice process. Learning assistants made a very positive

contribution to supporting individual pupils and groups of pupils to ensure that pupils participated in class lessons and progressed appropriately.

There was good preparation for choice at key stages including very good information and advice about courses and careers; effective use of the careers library; and helpful links with the careers adviser. There were very good opportunities for well-organised work experience, senior school conferences in partnership with other local schools, visits to careers conventions, colleges and universities; and profitable links with the business community. Pupils also had access to clear, accurate, relevant and up-to-date information and advice about further learning opportunities and career choices.

Staff with guidance responsibilities were well informed about individual pupils' overall curriculum needs and liaised with subject departments. There was a well established and effective process for the exchange of information between staff with guidance responsibilities and the careers service. Pupils were offered individual interviews with relevant staff and with careers advisors.

The school had made very good efforts to ensure that clear progression routes were in place for pupils of all abilities and aptitudes. Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) courses had been carefully considered to ensure the most appropriate range was offered. Subject and guidance teachers provided helpful advice and recommendations for course options in S3 to S6. Pupils and parents felt that when making course choice decisions they were well informed through course choice booklets and well supported by guidance and subject teachers, the school librarian and careers adviser. Recently introduced interviews with parent and S1 pupils at course choice time ensured pupils

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were fully engaged in the decision making process. The Young Enterprise 'Pathways 2 Success' session had contributed to S1 pupils making the most appropriate curriculum choices.

There were many good partnerships including with employers, Careers Scotland, Lothian and Edinburgh Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS), further education colleges, Columba 1400, HBoS and other agencies to provide a range of support for pupils at appropriate stages. The work of the centre and its Community Education department helped provide additional support and access to additional partner opportunities.

### Areas for development in continuity and progression in learning including transitions

The school should continue with the intention to develop whole school procedures and systems to allow the gathering and use of target setting and assessment and achievement information to ensure systematic tracking of pupils' progress. As part of this profiling initiative there should be more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own progress.

Course choice booklets should be further developed to include progression routes for all courses and clear information regarding types and levels of courses available. These should include updating of course guidelines and handbooks in some departments.

A consistent approach in reporting to parents in recommending courses and levels, at all course choice times, and across all departments, should be developed. Reports should clearly indicate what the levels in the reports mean and provide information on the types and levels of and progression in courses.

The school should continue with the whole staff consultation on pupil support, implementation of the ASL Act and review of national developments in pupil support to develop a more strategic approach in supporting pupils.

All departmental action plans should clearly reflect the whole school priority of age and stage, with the appropriate areas of development identified.

The school should aim for consistency in its implementation of departmental improvement planning.

## SUMMARY

### Commendable features

- ✿ The commitment of all staff to their pupils and to the planning for curricular flexibility.
- ✿ The guidelines and processes for standards and quality reporting, action planning and sharing best practice in learning and teaching.
- ✿ The working arrangements with cluster primary schools.
- ✿ The contribution of the Community Education department complementing learning and teaching in the school.

### Areas for development by the school

- ✿ The school should continue with its good start with arrangements for curriculum flexibility by systematically monitoring pupils' progress, auditing curriculum provision and progression, updating guidance on course choices and reviewing timetabling arrangements.
- ✿ The very good guidance on planning and self-evaluation should be more formally monitored to measure impact and establish consistency across the school.

- ✿ The very good progress in learning and teaching demonstrated by some departments should be extended to include all subjects and incorporate an appropriate range of learning and teaching techniques including the use of ICT.
- ✿ Further engage pupils and parents in discussion and decision making about the next stages of curricular innovation.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the school's S&Q report is a good reflection of the current development position.

The school will be supported to produce an action plan to meet the main recommendations in this report.

Examples of good practice identified in the commendable features will be recorded to enable their wider dissemination across the authority.

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