



Education  
Scotland  
Foghlam Alba



**Spark of Genius  
Glengarnock Learning  
Centre  
18 March 2014**

Education Scotland inspect schools in order to let parents<sup>1</sup> and young people know whether their school<sup>2</sup> provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with staff how they can improve the quality of care and education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the headteacher/senior managers and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which young people are involved. We also gather the views of young people, parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of care and education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of care and education in the school. We describe how well young people are doing, how good the service is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and young people work together and how they go about improving the school. We also comment on how well the school works with other groups in the community, including services which support young people. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit [www.educationscotland.gov.uk](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk). Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns from young people, parents and staff, and details about young people's examination performance. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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### **1. The school**

Spark of Genius Glengarnock Learning Centre is an independent non-denominational school which is located in a semi-rural area of North Ayrshire. The centre opened in August 2012, merging three Spark of Genius services in the West of Scotland. It provides care and education for boys and girls aged from eight to 17 years with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs. At the time of the inspection, 38 children and young people were placed at the school by 11 local authorities including three English authorities. The roll was 38 when the inspection was carried out in January 2014. Of these children and young people, 19 were looked after by Spark of Genius and other care providers locally. Young people's attendance was above the national average in the primary classes and in line with the national average in secondary classes in 2013.

## **2. Key strengths of the school**

- The quality of staff's care and knowledge of children and young people and their sensitivity to children and young people's needs.
- The quality of the environment for learning.
- Young people's learning experiences in hospitality, rural skills, digital media and sports.
- The links across care and education which are leading to improved attendance and more settled children and young people who are ready to learn.

## **3. How well do children and young people learn and achieve?**

Across the school, children and young people are making good progress in their learning. Staff have a strong awareness of children's care needs and help them to feel safe and secure. Care and education staff work together closely to support children and young people to engage with school and learning. Care staff escort children to school and support them in class. This is leading to improvements in communication between care and education, attendance at school and pupils being more settled and ready to learn. Where learning is practical and takes place in a real context, children and young people are more motivated and achieve better. They make positive contributions to lessons and focus on activities more. For example, in rural skills, young people grew their own vegetables and used these in the hospitality class to prepare lunch for their peers in the school dining room.

Children and young people are achieving well through a wide range of practical and vocational activities which develop skills for life and work such as communication, team work, motivation and leadership. Young people gain national qualifications in construction and rural skills and a certificate of work placement readiness. There is scope to provide more opportunities to

recognise young people's achievements. Children and young people contribute well to aspects of school life through areas of responsibility such as buddies, peer mentors and members of the Eco-committee. They respond well to learning in the outdoor environment and are enthused by opportunities to work with ponies, and other animals at a local farm.

Overall, young people achieve a good range of SQA qualifications and units from Access 3 to Intermediate 2. In the primary classes, staff use concrete materials to help children to improve their letter formation and spelling, including pasta, flour and rice. Across the centre, most children and young people are developing well their skills in spelling, grammar, reading and writing. The centre is aware that it needs to improve its procedures to highlight for children the skills which they are working to improve and their next steps in learning. In mathematics and numeracy, most children in the primary classes are becoming more confident in working on number. They talk confidently about the importance of measuring in real life and were able to accurately measure using centimetres and metres. Young people show ability in the use of information handling. They are able to present science information in a range of formats such as pie charts, line graphs and bar graphs. Children and young people have a sound understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and an active lifestyle. They have regular opportunities to participate in a wide range of sporting activities.

#### **4. How well does the school support children and young people to develop and learn?**

Overall the centre supports children and young people to develop and learn well. The centre has in place a satisfactory curriculum for children and young people. The curriculum has a clear rationale which outlines how the learning is planned and delivered across the primary years, S1-3 and the senior phase. However, some staff are not confident in using Curriculum for Excellence guidance to plan suitable learning experiences in, and across, curriculum areas. The

centre should now put in place structured curriculum programmes to ensure that there is suitable progression for children and young people's learning in all areas. The centre is aware that there are number of award schemes which could broaden young people's range of attainment, and recognise aspects of their learning.

Staff provide a welcoming, caring and nurturing environment for children and young people which ensures that they feel safe. This is enhanced by the very attractive design and layout of the whole learning environment. Small class sizes allow staff to plan flexibly for young people who may need their own space at points during the day. Staff work well with partner agencies and local authority staff to evaluate learners' needs. In some classes, the pace of learning is slow and tasks are not sufficiently challenging for children and young people. The centre has a variety of plans for children's progress in care and education. While most young people are making progress with targets set within plans, these should be reviewed to make them easier for children and their parents to understand. Staff model appropriate ways to promote positive behaviour for parents at home.

## **5. How well does the school improve the quality of its work?**

The Managing Director and senior managers are ambitious for the school and have well established processes at whole-service level for quality assuring its work across care and education. Senior managers work well with staff and have successfully involved them in evaluating the work of the school. Other stakeholders, such as pupils and parents provide feedback on the school's performance. Managers recently introduced a more rigorous approach to improving the quality of learning and teaching across the centre. This has not yet impacted on the quality of young people's learning experiences at S1-S3. While processes for self-evaluation at service level are very strong, the impact of these processes at school level is less clear. The centre needs to develop further important aspects of Curriculum for Excellence. These include

arrangements for tracking, evidencing and assessing pupils' progress through the broad general education and ensuring that staff receive appropriate professional development to secure these improvements.

## **6. What happens next?**

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that most of the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. With support from the Directors the centre will be able to make the necessary improvements. Our Independent schools link inspector along with the Directors will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the centre has improved.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and Directors.

- Continue to improve the quality of children and young people's learning experiences across the school, particularly at S1-S3.
- Further improve the curriculum to ensure children receive a broad general education which allows them to make links in their learning and build on prior learning.
- Further develop opportunities for continuing professional development for all staff in order to secure school improvement.

Quality indicators help schools, 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 Spark of Genius Glengarnock Learning Centre.

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>good</b>

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

<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>good</b>

**HM Inspector:** Dr Kate Hannah  
18 March 2014

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

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

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/index.asp>

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