



Education  
Scotland  
Foghlam Alba



**Spark of Genius  
Musselburgh  
Learning Centre  
17 March 2015**

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 Learning Centre is an independent, non-denominational school which is located in Musselburgh, East Lothian. It provides education for secondary aged young people with a range of social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs. The roll was 23 when the inspection was carried out in January 2015. At the time of the inspection, young people were placed at the learning centre by three local authorities. No young people attending the learning centre had a coordinated support plan. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2014. The learning centre was in the process of recruiting a headteacher.

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

- Warm, nurturing relationships which are helping young people to re-engage with their learning.
- High quality literacy learning experiences across the learning centre.
- Positive behaviour of young people.
- Effective arrangements for ensuring successful transitions.

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

Across the learning centre, young people are making good progress with their learning. Staff have warm, nurturing relationships with young people. This helps young people to feel safe and secure and helps them overcome any anxieties with their learning. A number of young people have made significant progress with their attendance since joining the learning centre. In most classes, young people are motivated and eager to learn. They were most enthusiastic about their learning when it was related to areas of interest such as English, photography, craft and design, and physical education (P.E). Staff need to consistently engage young people by using practical learning approaches which take place within real and relevant contexts. In almost all lessons, staff share with young people what they want them to learn and give feedback on their progress. Young people are taking responsibility for their learning but would benefit from more opportunities to reflect on what they have learned. Most staff are skilled at supporting young people to make positive choices with their behaviour. Commendably, the learning centre has had no exclusions in the past year.

Young people are achieving well through a range of vocational and practical opportunities which are developing their skills for life and work such as team work, communication and leadership. Young people gain qualifications in rural skills, construction and mechanics.

There is scope to increase the number of young people participating in work experience placements. Young people contribute to aspects of school life through participating in the student council. Staff should continue to identify and develop ways to enable young people to engage in improving the learning centre.

Overall, young people achieved a good range of national qualifications and units. A few young people achieved units at Intermediate 1 and 2. Across the learning centre, most young people are developing very well their skills in listening, talking, reading and writing. Senior pupils are writing for a range of purposes such as personal experiences and analysing an advertisement. They are also expressing their views on a range of issues including financial cuts to the armed forces and the independence debate. Young people have opportunities to apply their literacy skills in new and unfamiliar situations. For example, they attended a debate in the Scottish Parliament to learn about local and national issues which affect their lives. In mathematics and numeracy, young people are at various stages of developing key skills in number, money, time, measurement and information handling. Staff should plan more appropriately challenging experiences for young people to apply their numeracy skills across their learning. Most young people have a good understanding and awareness of the choices they make and how this impacts on their health and wellbeing. Young people spoke knowledgeably on key factors such as healthy eating, substance misuse and sexual health.

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

The learning centre supports young people to develop and learn well. Staff provide a welcoming, caring environment for young people. Young people and their families speak very highly of the pastoral support they receive from staff. Most staff plan tasks and activities well to meet young people's needs. In some classes, the pace of learning is too slow and tasks are not sufficiently challenging for young people. Teachers, skills instructors and education assistants work well

together to effectively support young people to progress with their learning and make positive behaviour choices. The learning centre works closely with partner agencies to help identify and meet the needs of young people. All young people have an individualised education plan (IEP). Most young people are making progress with targets in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Targets within IEPs should be reviewed to make it easier for young people to know what they are working towards and how staff will support them.

The learning centre has an appropriate curriculum in place for young people. The curriculum has a clear focus on developing young people's skills for learning, life and work. Staff are becoming more confident in using Curriculum for Excellence guidance to plan suitable learning experiences in, and across curriculum areas. The learning centre needs to put in place structured programmes to ensure young people are able to progress their learning in all areas. Young people are accessing a range of wider achievement opportunities such as John Muir Trust and Saltire Awards. The learning centre should work with community partners to enrich young people's learning and extend ways for young people to participate and achieve out with the school day and during school holidays. The learning centre has effective transition planning in place. All young people move on to further learning, training or employment when they leave the learning centre.

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

Directors and senior managers have effective processes at whole-service level for quality assuring the learning centre. Senior managers work well with staff, young people and parents and have successfully involved them in evaluating the work of the learning centre. Senior managers should continue to identify ways to involve all partners more directly in improvement planning. Young people's attainment, attendance and IEPs are regularly checked to measure progress. This analysis could be improved by including young people's achievements and progress both within and across each centre. The learning centre has clear improvement priorities in place

for implementing Curriculum for Excellence. Senior managers know they need to develop important aspects of Curriculum for Excellence including using assessment and moderation effectively to accurately measure young people's progress. There is scope to increase professional development opportunities for staff to help secure these improvements. The Director of Education and centre manager provide effective leadership. They are highly respected by young people, parents, staff and partners. Young people and staff sometimes take on leadership roles. For example, pupils lead warm up and training drills in physical education (P.E) and staff lead on developments in health and wellbeing, and pastoral care. Young people and staff would benefit from increased leadership opportunities across the learning centre.

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

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the learning centre's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The Directors will inform parents about the centre's progress as part of the Directors' arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its centres.

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

- Improve the consistency of pace and challenge across learning and teaching.
- Further develop partnerships to enrich the curriculum.
- Provide high quality support for the professional development of staff.

Quality indicators help schools, education authorities/board of governors 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?*.

Here are the evaluations for Spark of Genius Musselburgh 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>good</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>good</b>

**HM Inspector:** Steven McPherson  
17 March 2015



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/primsec/SparkofGeniusMusselburghLearningCentreEastLothian.asp>

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