



**Camphill School Aberdeen  
17 January 2012**

Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate (Social Care and Social Work Improvement 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**

Camphill School Aberdeen is an independent school situated on two closely located campuses in Aberdeen. The roll was 67 when the inspection was carried out in November 2011. The school provides care, education and therapy services for children and young people aged three to 19 years with additional support needs arising from autism and complex physical disabilities. Of the 67 children and young people, 21 attended on a day basis. The Camphill Schools' Early Years Initiative, Amber Kindergarten was inspected at the same time. It provides care and education for 12 children aged three to five years in partnership with Aberdeen City Council. Groups of up to ten vulnerable local children attend weekly and whole day therapeutic sessions at the school's Nature Nurture group. Additional services include the St Andrews Project which offers individualised therapeutic programmes including family support, respite and emergency care for one to ten year olds. The recently established Sapphire Project provides an on site alternative to college for young people from 18 to 21 years. Nine children had a coordinated support plan.

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

- Happy, relaxed children and young people who feel safe, valued and respected.
- The dedication and enthusiasm of staff and their sensitivity to individual needs.
- Use of the natural environment to develop children and young people's communication, personal, social and vocational skills.
- The quality of transitions.
- The breadth of the curriculum including therapeutic support services.
- The effective implementation of a clear and shared vision for care and education of the coordinators.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

Children and young people are actively involved in their own learning within a calm, caring and nurturing environment. Children in the kindergarten are highly motivated in their learning. They concentrate fully when activities and experiences capture their attention. During free play indoors and out, children initiate their own play. They readily invent games, investigate and solve problems. Across the school, children and young people record their own progress through individual photograph albums, drawing books and learning logs. High quality planning and feedback for their individual needs helps to ensure that children and young people are challenged at an

appropriate level. Groups of vulnerable local children are improving their physical, social and emotional wellbeing through exploratory and creative play at weekly and whole day sessions in the Nature Nurture group. Creative learning activities are helping young people to become more confident.

The school uses the local community and outdoor environment very effectively to build on children and young people's personal achievements and self esteem at all stages. Children in the kindergarten welcome a local playgroup into their learning environment and young people attend community groups such as a local drama group. Children and young people gain important social and vocational skills through gardening, walking, exploring nature, adventure training, cycling, camping and looking after community pets and livestock. The living environment is used very well to compliment learning in school. Care staff provide support in class and within houses. All children and young people are involved in contributing to community life through daily tasks such as growing and tending crops, setting the table and preparing food. They attend meetings to agree responsibilities in re-cycling and community tasks. Staff use these tasks well to help develop children and young people's literacy and numeracy skills and awareness of healthy living.

All kindergarten children speak or communicate in their own way to confidently express their ideas, needs, discoveries and negotiate with friends. They are making very good progress in gaining the earliest reading skills. Children are making very good progress across almost all numeracy and early mathematical concepts. Across the school, children and young people are encouraged to use their communication supports well. They communicate with each other and staff through familiar objects, symbols, pictures and voice-activated software. A few young people read well independently and write at length with support including describing science experiments in the laboratory. All young people have opportunities to gain an increasing range of SQA awards at Access levels 1 to 3 and a large number have achieved awards from the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society. A few are being supported successfully to attend mainstream schools part time and gain further

qualifications. They develop skills in enterprise when running their own weekly café and contributing healthy home-made recipes to 'One Planet' day with guests from the local community.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

A regular, diverse programme of activities allows children and young people to develop their skills effectively. Staff use of the outdoors to enrich learning is outstanding. Opportunities are planned coherently to build a depth and breadth of experience, build on the levels of challenge and allow children and young people the opportunity to make choices which are relevant to them. Staff in the kindergarten, and increasingly across the school plan learning through the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence. The school offers a highly comprehensive educational programme for each pupil which includes a broad range of subjects. Children benefit from significant therapeutic involvement from a range of specialists who support young people through individual intervention. Religious and moral education is taught as part of the curriculum. Young people access college placements where appropriate and all have significant opportunities to learn skills for life and work both within and outwith the campus. The school places considerable emphasis on planning and supporting new students and those moving on to the next phase of their lives.

All children and young people have a personal learning plan which highlights accurately their strengths, areas of learning, targets for the term and how these might be achieved. Across the school, teachers demonstrate considerable skills in planning outcomes for a wide range of abilities and needs within their classes. Staff use very effective approaches to managing young people's anxieties and behaviour in ways which minimise the need for physical restraint. Young people and their families benefit from therapeutic interventions on site with a choice of individual therapies, prescribed by the campus doctor. These include speech formation, physiotherapy, movement, therapeutic art, riding, therapeutic music, massage, play and counselling. GPs contribute to child study meetings and take the

opportunity to observe children and young people during play and social times in their houses to get a broader picture of their health and wellbeing. The school recognises that it needs to develop further the capacity of staff to meet the needs of children with complex health and physical disabilities.

#### **4. How well do staff work with others to support children and young people's learning?**

Parents express very high levels of satisfaction with the school and kindergarten. They value regular communication with staff to discuss children's progress and planning for the next stage in their children's education. The school provides well planned, targeted support for families and carers when needed. Parents are helped to be more involved in their children's learning through weekly emailing, class diaries, learning logs and regular meetings with house coordinators, teachers and co-workers. They attend lunch with children by arrangement with staff at their house. Parents attend regularly festivals and sports days. A range of effective partnerships with organisations and professionals such as Technological Assessment and Support Service for Children and the Curriculum. Aberdeen College, The National Autistic Society and local schools are helping to ensure access to appropriate learning experiences for young people.

#### **5. Are staff and children and young people actively involved in improving their school community?**

All children and young people have positive opportunities to influence the work of their community through participating in house meetings and the school council. The development of the Eco-school project has helped broaden pupils' involvement and awareness of the local community, national and global issues. Young people contribute very effectively to the school community and estates by growing organic vegetables and fruit, designing and maintaining the gardens and building and developing the play and recreation areas. The large

international community of co-workers and staff contribute significantly to children and young people's awareness of other cultures through learning and community events. These approaches are leading to improvements in the service and building further the highly positive relationships across the service.

## **6. Does the school have high expectations of all children and young people?**

The school's ethos is outstanding and the levels of pastoral care of children and their families are very high. The kindergarten and school have high expectations of all children and young people. All coordinators and staff are highly reflective and strongly committed to improvement. They are fully involved in planning for improvement. The coordinators and Council of Management have successfully established a culture of self-evaluation across all care and education staff through mentoring at all levels.

## **7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?**

The school has a clear vision which is reflected in all aspects of its provision. The coordinators demonstrate a high degree of professional competence and encourage innovative approaches to meeting learners' needs at all levels. The school is responsive to stakeholders needs and has developed further its services in response to requests. Continuing professional development is of a high standard. All staff are mentored and supervised regularly. The school offers a very comprehensive induction course and the BA in Social Pedagogy jointly with the University of Aberdeen. Staff work with a wide range of national and international professionals to improve learning for children and young people with autism.

## 8. What happens next?

The school provides a very good quality of education. Therefore, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The Council of Management will inform parents about the school's progress as part of their arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its school.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and Council of Management.

- Continue to develop robust systems for tracking children and young people's progress within Curriculum for Excellence.
- Continue to improve staff training and resources to meet a broader range of additional support needs.

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?*.

Here are the evaluations for Camphill School Aberdeen.

School

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

Kindergarten

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Children's experiences</b>	<b>excellent</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>very good</b>

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and kindergarten

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

**HM Inspector:**  
Kate Hannah  
17 January 2012

**Care Inspector:**  
Susan Barrie

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

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You can find our complaints procedure on our website [www.educationscotland.gov.uk](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk) or alternatively you can contact our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

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