



**Glenalmond College  
Perth  
24 November 2009**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents<sup>1</sup> and young people know whether their school provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with school staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the headteacher 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 which young people are involved in. We also gather the views of young people, parents, staff and members of the school 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 education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well young people are doing, how good the school 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. 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.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.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. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

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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.

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### **1. The school**

Glenalmond College is an independent senior school. It serves a wide geographical area with young people travelling from throughout the UK and across the world to board during term time. The roll was 394 when the inspection was carried out in October 2009. At this time, 340 young people stayed in eight boarding houses.

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

- Young people's high levels of attainment and achievement.
- Polite, confident and articulate young people and the contribution made by prefects to the life of the school.
- Outstanding pastoral care and the hard work of staff to meet young people's individual needs.
- Relationships amongst all members of the school community.
- The Warden's leadership of learning.

## **3. Examples of good practice**

- Supporting learning through a virtual learning environment in history.
- Building community spirit and the quality of personal relationships.
- The development of responsibility through the prefect structure.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

Young people are highly motivated and readily engage in a wide range of challenging activities, in and beyond the classroom. Almost all

make good use of advice from teachers, house staff and tutors to improve their work. All share positive relationships with staff and each other. They confidently express their views and are developing very effective skills in negotiating and decision-making. Young people work well together to organise and manage school and boarding house events. They successfully take on a high level of responsibility, ranging from prefect duty to daily house routines. All feel valued, respected and well cared for as individuals.

Young people are confident and articulate. The range of their achievements is impressive. They are developing very effective personal and social skills through their participation in an extensive range of sporting, musical and cultural activities. Participation levels and achievement in music are high. The majority are learning to play an instrument and some achieve considerable success participating in national choirs and orchestras and in national examinations. Almost all achieve very well in an exceptionally wide range of sports. The school enjoys much success in team sports, for example in Scottish schools cross-country events for senior boys and in girls' lacrosse. A few young people have gained international honours in sport, such as rugby, hockey, cricket, polo, tennis, sailing, golf, shooting, lacrosse and rounders. Last year, a commendable number of young people achieved the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at gold level. Young people make an outstanding contribution to the school, local and wider communities through their involvement in the Combined Cadet Force. Prefects work closely with house staff to help organise many evening and weekend activities. They show strong leadership qualities and a sense of responsibility by persevering and completing tasks. Young people are developing a positive attitude to enterprise and use their enterprising skills effectively to raise significant funds for charity. They show commendable resourcefulness, reliability and resilience in all that they do, including their commitment to community service, locally and on international projects. A significant minority have gained a qualification in food hygiene.

Young people are making very good progress in their learning. The school has maintained very high standards of attainment over the last

few years. Young people in the Second Form make very good progress across their subjects. In the Third Form, young people continue to make very good progress in their learning and deepen their understanding of their subjects. In the Fourth to Sixth Forms, standards in class work are very high and young people perform very strongly in national examinations with almost half attaining an A grade at A level. Almost all young people go on to study at university.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

The school's curriculum has a clear philosophy which reflects the shared vision and values of the school. The range and quality of sporting opportunities offered by the school is exceptional. Young people have a very good choice of courses and activities which provides a high degree of challenge. Young people have responsibility for making decisions and managing their work and out-of-class commitments. The academic programme is strongly complemented by a well-coordinated range of experiences across the day, evening and weekend. The school is responsive to the changing and varying needs of individuals and groups. Staff recognise the need to develop further the quality of support for the increasing number of young people for whom English is an additional language joining the school. The school is considering different ways of re-structuring the timetable to make best use of time. Effective transition arrangements support young people joining the school at Second Form entry level and at other forms across the school. Young people are very well prepared for leaving school and moving on to university.

All staff work well together to provide a broad range of experiences across the school and boarding houses. These experiences meet the emotional, physical, learning and social needs of young people effectively. Staff know young people well and successfully adapt the curriculum to ensure good progress in learning. Higher achieving young people across the school are benefiting from a series of lectures and challenging discussions. Tutors contribute well to helping young people make progress with identified needs. The quality of feedback and support given to young people in setting appropriate targets is

variable across tutor groups. Class work is well matched to meet the needs of almost all learners. Staff, who are responsible for supporting learning, provide teachers with helpful information and advice about meeting the additional support needs of individual learners. They also offer very effective direct support to these individuals. Further support is required for young people who have only a basic proficiency in oral and written English. The school has very good induction arrangements to support young people when they first arrive at the school and at their boarding houses. The overall result is an effective whole-school approach to supporting individual needs, with young people feeling that they are very well supported. The help that young people give to others across the age range in the boarding houses is a strong and effective feature of support. The impact of this structured approach results in well rounded achievements and an inclusive environment for learning.

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

The school has created strong and supportive partnerships with parents, the school council and members of the local and wider community. The school keeps parents well informed about its work through attractive, informative newsletters, open days and helpful, written reports on their child's progress and achievement each term. Local police and health professionals provide useful assistance with aspects of the school's health education programme. A distinctive feature of the school's partnerships to support learning is the breadth of experience which comes from local and international projects. The school plays a key role in their local community by participating in and hosting a very wide range of sporting, cultural, musical and social events. The school chaplain provides church services and spiritual support to the school community and local residents. Young people develop their appreciation of the needs of others by taking an active part in the school's community service programme, including visiting residents of care homes, working on projects with people with learning difficulties, serving in local charity shops and organising fundraising

events. Young people promote global citizenship through the support they provide for communities during residential trips, for example to Latin America. Young people are developing a good understanding of sustainability by participating in a range of recycling, gardening and forest management projects. The benefits of these partnerships extend young people's learning significantly.

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

The school successfully gathers the views of parents, school council members and young people through formal surveys. Young people are given good opportunities to contribute their views on their experiences in the boarding houses. These views are acted upon and used to bring about change. However, young people feel that they should have more opportunities to be more fully involved in decisions about how to improve learning. Staff are highly committed to the values of the school and to the wider personal and social development of young people. They are actively involved in evaluating the work of the school and in setting priorities for improvement. However, as yet, staff are not fully involved in planning school improvements. The school has effective arrangements in place for reviewing and improving the work of the school. This has resulted in a number of improvements to supporting young people and tracking their progress in learning. Continued quality assurance is required to build on the best practice and achieve further improvement across the school.

## **7. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?**

The school has a strong ethos of participation and achievement and sets the highest expectations of success in everything young people do. There is a very strong emphasis on respect and care for others. Staff and prefects are confident in their knowledge of child protection procedures. Relationships across the school are positive, and almost all young people's behaviour is exemplary. Young people and staff

have high expectations of themselves and each other. They are proud of the school and celebrate each other's successes. Young people benefit from the wide range of activities across the seven day week and including evenings. Young people make a positive contribution to the school community. Many take responsibility for aspects of school life, for example as prefects, leaders in sport, members of the Amnesty Group or pupil council and leading elements of the Combined Cadet Force. The school contributes well to developing young people's understanding of adopting safe and healthy lifestyles.

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

The school's vision, based on a strong sense of values and tradition, is at the heart of all that it does. The Warden provides the school with strong leadership in achieving this vision. He has gained the loyalty and respect of staff, parents and young people. He is ably supported by the senior management team who demonstrate close and effective teamwork. The school governing council plays a significant role in ensuring that the school offers high quality education. Its members work closely with the Warden to consider new developments and school improvement. House staff reflect effectively on the work of the boarding houses and plan for improvement. Teachers, tutors, house staff and prefects lead in a variety of ways to continuously develop and improve the care and support offered to young people. The school is well placed to continue to deliver high quality education for all of its young people.

## **9. What happens next?**

The inspection team was able to rely on the school's self-evaluation to make its evaluations and the school agreed with these evaluations at an early stage of the inspection. As a result, the inspection team was able to change its focus during the inspection to help the school plan to improve even more.

The school provides a very good quality of education. Therefore, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and board of governors.

- To continue to involve staff and young people more fully in making decisions about learning and in planning and reviewing school improvement.

Quality indicators help schools, education authorities 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 Glenalmond College.

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>excellent</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>good</b>

**HM Inspector:** Belinda Greer  
24 November 2009

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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