

Follow-through Inspection Report

Alexandra Parade Primary

March 2005

The Inspection

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education HMIE published a report on standards and quality in Alexandra Parade Primary School in March 2003 following their inspection of the school in November 2002. Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original report.

After consultation with HMIE, it was agreed that this follow-through report would be the responsibility of the education authority. Members of the Education Improvement Service visited the school in June 2004 to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work and to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

Continuous Improvement

Through their effective planning for improvement approaches, the Senior Management Team have clearly demonstrated their ability to improve many of the key features of their work. Each action point had a designated member of the management team appointed to lead and co-ordinate the developments. A planned programme for staff development, monitoring and guidance was established. As a result they have made very good progress towards meeting the outcomes of the Action Plan within the timescales set.

There has been continuous improvement in the work of the school. The programmes of study more fully meet the needs of all pupils and offer greater challenge and pace. Pupil motivation and skills development have improved and the overall levels of attainment have been maintained.

Since the inspection, the school has experienced some changes in staffing, including the long-term absence and subsequent retrial of the Head Teacher. Commendably, some of the more experienced members of staff stepped into the management role in an acting capacity to ensure continuity and to avoid any slippage in their progress.

The school will continue to monitor and evaluate its work and provide continuous staff development opportunities, guidance and support to meet the needs of the school and staff.

Progress Towards the Main Points For Action

The initial inspection report identified 3 main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

Main point for action 1

Teachers should review their planning to ensure more consistent opportunities for pupils to experience problem-solving in mathematics and three-dimensional work in art and design. They should plan more systematically their teaching of talking.

The school has met this recommendation.

The Senior Management Team and staff audited and evaluated the existing planning formats and programmes of study to identify staff development needs, allocation of time, teaching strategies and resources relating to problem-solving within the mathematics programme, three-dimensional work within the art and design programme and the teaching of talk.

Problem-solving in Mathematics

All staff received in-service training to ensure they had clear knowledge and understanding of problem-solving strategies and activities, the effective teaching methodologies to be employed and the effective use of resources.

New planning formats were devised to support consistency of practice and to ensure an appropriate range of activities were being systematically applied across the stages. Assessment procedures were built into the planning process to identify next steps in teaching and to monitor pupil progress. A timetable of classroom monitoring and observation was established to support the Senior Management Team in evaluating the impact of these developments on teaching and learning and pupil attainment.

The programme of study for Mathematics has been amended to incorporate a planned, cohesive scheme of work in problem-solving from P1 – P7.

The levels of teacher and pupil confidence within the area of problem-solving have increased. Teachers are more effective in their teaching of problem-solving strategies. Pupils have ample and more appropriate opportunities to develop their skills in problem-solving approaches and are now more able to discuss and apply a wider range of problem-solving strategies.

The impact of these developments on the levels of attainment and pupils' skills development is monitored through the effective tracking strategies in place. These levels will increase as the programme and strategies become embedded and the pupils progress through each of the stages.

Three-Dimensional Work in Art and Design.

A new programme of study for Art and Design is in place, which ensures breadth and balance across all aspects of the coursework.

Staff received training in three-dimensional work and visited the local Art Factory to experience working with clay. A Database of twentieth century sculptors and useful Websites has been established to provide further guidance for teachers on linking pupils' practical tasks to the study of artists within their three-dimensional work.

Staff have clear guidelines and are more aware of the relevant language and skills to be developed in this area.

The new planners also ensure continuity of practice, pace and challenge and provide a clear focus for three-dimensional work to be taught more systematically at each stage. The senior management team monitor planning and evaluate progression.

The quality of work produced by the pupils has shown improvement.

Teaching of Talking

A review of the planning procedures, activities and resources in place for Talking was undertaken and matched against the requirements of the 5-14 curriculum to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

All staff had a planned programme of training to highlight the strands to be taught and the skills to be developed. Links to other areas of the Language programme and links to other areas of the curriculum were identified.

Assessment and Recording strategies were identified and agreed. Pupil self-assessment materials were produced as part of the assessment programme. Guidelines are now in place to assist teachers with their planning, assessment and recording of Talking.

The Language Policy has been updated to include all new developments.

There is evidence within the forward planning to show that a more systematic approach to the teaching of Talking is in place.

Main point for action 2

The school should continue to build on the best teaching practice to more fully meet pupils' needs, particularly in aspects of mathematics.

The school has made very good progress towards meeting this recommendation.

Through their involvement in the training programmes and staff discussions, teachers have a clearer vision and greater awareness of what has to be taught, the expected outcomes to be achieved, the appropriate methodologies and strategies to be applied and the assessment procedures to use to evaluate their work and pupil progress.

The existing programmes of study were reviewed to identify those areas where the pace of learning and level of challenge within the tasks needed to be addressed. Resources were purchased to support new activities and teachers were given guidance on their use.

Tracking procedures have identified an increase in pupil attainment at the Early Stages. Evidence from classroom observations shows an improvement in pupil motivation throughout the school and in particular at the P5 and P6 stages. Pupils are more often 'on task' and have more planned opportunities to enrich their learning experiences through the use of games, problem-solving activities and interactive programmes.

Training has been provided in the use of relevant computer software. Teachers now incorporate this into their maths programme where appropriate. The pupils have more opportunities to use the computers to develop their skills in information handling situations. Support for staff development is ongoing and arrangements are in place for further in-class support to integrate ICT into the learning and teaching of maths.

Main point for action 3

The school should develop its approaches to assessing pupils' progress in Art and Design.

The school has made very good progress towards meeting this recommendation.

Building on the good assessment approaches and practice already in place, teachers have identified appropriate assessment strategies and procedures for recording and reporting on pupil progress across each of the strands.

From the developments in implementing the new programme of study for Art and Design they have established a common planning format to ensure consistency of practice and breadth and balance across the attainment outcomes. The recording format incorporates an evaluation section, which supports their identification of the next steps in pupils' learning.

Teachers have had guidance through training and are more competent in assessing the full range of activities. They are given further advice and support from the feedback they receive from the Senior Management Team following their classroom observation sessions and monitoring of the Forward Plans.

Assessment is now more systematic and consistent across the stages. Procedures for tracking and recording pupils' progress in Art and Design are in place and are used effectively for planning and reporting to parents, pupils and other members of staff.

The Senior Management Team will continuously monitor and review these new developments to ensure consistency of practice.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The school has made very good progress in addressing the main points for action outlined within the report. The promoted staff, with the support of the education authority, have effectively strengthened their approaches to planning and assessment. This has had a very positive impact on the quality of learning and teaching, as there is a clearer focus on more fully meeting pupils' needs. Teachers have received valuable support and guidance and have successfully built on the good practice already in place to enhance and enrich the learning experiences for their pupils.

These developments will be continually monitored throughout the next session to ensure progression and to address further developmental needs as required. The programme of staff development will also be continued to ensure continuity of practice and to induct the new members of staff in the procedures and systems used throughout the school.

As a result of the progress made by the school HMIE will make no further visit in connection with the March 2003 inspection.



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