



Follow-through Inspection Report

Hillhead High School

May 2010

1. The Inspection

Following their inspection of the school in October 2007, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report at the end of January 2008 on key aspects of the school's work at all stages. HM Inspectors had evaluated how well the school was raising achievement for all pupils, taking into account the extent to which pupils' learning needs were met by the curriculum and teaching. They also analysed pupils' attainment in national examinations, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement.

HM Inspectors had asked that parents and carers be informed of the extent of improvement by the school after two years. Working with the education authority, the school had prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original report.

The Area Education Manager, link Quality Improvement Officer and other members of the Education Improvement Service had visited the school throughout 2008-2010 to evaluate the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work and to evaluate the progress made in responding to the main points for action.

2. Continuous Improvement

The headteacher at the time of the inspection retired and a new headteacher took up post in August 2008. There had been further changes to the senior leadership team over that period including the appointment of two new deputy headteachers in August 2009.

The new headteacher and his senior leadership team had led teachers very effectively in taking forward the main recommendations of the report. Staff at all levels had shown a willingness to secure improvements and had participated in a range of working groups to take initiatives forward. These had included, amongst others, Promoting Positive Behaviour, Curriculum for Excellence and Learning and Teaching, Attendance and Homework review groups.

The authority's Education Improvement Service had supported the school, and school staff had taken advantage of opportunities available for professional development through the authority's in-service programme, in-house training and sharing of good practice. There had been a focus on improving the quality and consistency of learning and teaching, tracking progress and attainment and improving attendance of young people.

Staff in the school had continued to encourage praise and support through the increased use of praise cards, certificates of achievement, displaying pupils' work on walls and the new school website.

The school had introduced a 'Key Person' Initiative in S4 to support young people's attainment and this had proved a success. The high number of staff volunteering in support of this and other projects had been noteworthy, indicating a willingness of staff to sustain improvements, and had helped to improve exam results and pupil confidence. New strategies to encourage pupil attendance at examinations have impacted positively on results, especially in English and Maths at Level 3.

The school had improved its approach to profiling and target setting. Action plans for departments and targets for pupils had now become a key feature post- prelim examinations.

Supported study is an integral part of raising attainment and 6 week programmes of planned supported study had been introduced before the S4 prelims, S5/6 prelims and the national exams themselves. Many staff run voluntary supported study throughout the course of the year. As well as an Easter revision programme offered by many departments, others offer a revision day prior to national exam day and some offer an early morning supported study session. All of these steps had led to an improved performance in SQA examinations.

Behaviour management is an integral part of ensuring high attainment and one of the strategies at Hillhead had been the introduction of several Behaviour Support Groups which run in partnership with Ladywell Learning Centre. To encourage promoting positive behaviour many reward schemes had been introduced, for example Halloween party, Irn Bru Carnival Trip, Easter Film Outing and trips to Alton Towers. As a result the number of half day openings lost to exclusions had declined. Year to date figures to end of March 2010 show a continuation of this reduction.

3. Progress Towards the Main Points for Action

Main point for action 1

The report identified four main points for action:

Improve attendance and attainment, particularly at S3/S4

The school had made very good progress towards this target.

A short-life working group had been formed to devise strategies to improve attendance. This had generated a number of very good ideas which had been incorporated into a new policy and this had been implemented successfully. Staff were now much more aware of their responsibilities to carry out these strategies. Praise and reward were used as an incentive for continued very good attendance, for example the introduction of the Hillhead Year Group Lottery and End Term/Year Award Trips.

An Attendance Council had been set up with the appropriate CPD for volunteer Panel members. Young people with attendance of 70-80% became a target of focussed support delivered by the Pupil Support Team who had also produced support materials to work with youngsters with the aim to improve their attendance.

Improved awareness of the need for excellent attendance and timekeeping around the school had been developed through the introduction of weekly assemblies, use of pupil questionnaires, the daily and weekly monitoring of absentees by depute headteachers and regular meetings between the Pupil Support Team and the Senior leadership team regarding individual attendance statistics. A more focused engagement with the Educational Psychologist team had led to the development of strategies for the most vulnerable young people.

The involvement of the Parent Council in relation to these attendance initiatives had been welcomed and had helped to reinforce their impact.

As a result attendance had improved from 84% in session 2006-07 to 88% in session 2007-08 and to 89% in session 2008-2009. Year-to-date figures for session 2009-10 show this improvement being sustained.

Since the HMIE report, attainment in national testing at 5-14, Standard Grade, Higher

and Advanced Higher had shown some important improvements and in some key areas the school had achieved its best results since 2001.

In 2009 by the end of S2 attainment in national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics had shown significant improvement. Now, the majority of young people were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and mathematics with around half achieving the appropriate level in writing.

In 2009 by the end of S4, the numbers of young people achieving five or more awards in SQA examinations at level 5 (Credit or equivalent) had increased to 32%. This was the highest since 1999, was in line with the national pattern and was well above the levels achieved by similar schools. The percentage of young people achieving five or more awards at levels 4 and 3, while still below those of similar schools, had increased by 9% and 2% respectively on 2007. There had been very good progress in performance at this stage which the school should build on.

In 2009 by the end S6, the percentage of young people achieving five or more Highers was in line with the national pattern and was well above the pattern of achievement in similar schools. Also, the numbers of young people achieving three or more Highers and one or more Higher was in line with the top 25% of similar schools.

In 2009 the school had continued to offer a very high number of Advanced Higher courses which enabled very good progression for young people. The percentage achieving one or more award at this level was in line with the national pattern. Over the last five years performance at this level had always been in the top 25% of comparable schools.

Main point for action 2

Improve approaches to learning, teaching and meeting needs through sharing best practice.

The school had made very good progress towards this target.

The school had engaged in a strategic, planned programme of Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Active Learning teaching strategies to ensure that pupils were actively involved in their own learning, were developing skills to become curious and creative and to think critically. This had been promoted through the creation of a Learning and Teaching Working Group who had shared resources, knowledge and good practice throughout the school. The school had appointed two active learning champions who are currently working on a three-year project with Glasgow University.

Staff development training at Inset Days with practical sessions and a coordinated approach to staff development in preparation for Curriculum for Excellence had been well received as had the development of a staff shared ICT area where departments could save and share examples of good practice. Opportunities for sharing good practice in relation to learning and teaching had now become a standard item on agendas at every principal teacher and most department meetings.

Experiences and outcomes within Curriculum for Excellence had been consistently reviewed across the school and courses for S1 had been carefully planned. The school had developed a number of interdisciplinary learning projects, for example

- Environment – Biology/Geography environment
- Using the Seismometer to measure the effects of Earthquakes – Physics/Geography
- Play in a Day’ – History/Drama.

The establishment of the Chinese Hub in the school had increased opportunities for further interdisciplinary learning such as language and culture, cooking in Home Economics, Lanterns and Kites in Art and these are still at an early stage of development.

The development of new courses in personal and social education had improved provision for pupils in S2. Increased provision in relation to ICT had increased stimulation and motivation within the classroom and had enhanced the learning opportunities for young people. The English as an Additional Language (EAL) department had implemented Glasgow City Council's planning sheets, setting and reviewing targets every term. Pupils with EAL who had low scores in accelerated reading had been targeted and this was beginning to have an impact.

The school had increased its core provision of courses to meet the varying needs of its young people, for example 14 different subjects at Intermediate 1 level and at Access 3 level an increase of 6 subjects. Moreover, the school had continued to meet the needs of its more able youngsters by offering 11 Advanced Higher courses. There had also been an increased provision of courses to cater for vocational and wider achievement across the school for example: The Princes' Trust (S3); Duke of Edinburgh; Financial Education (S3 Maths); Community Involvement Programme (S4); Holistic Therapy and the introduction of an in-house Hair and Beauty Salon (Cosmetology). The school had continued to offer a wide range of Minority Time Activities on a Friday afternoon including, for example glass painting, canoeing, rock climbing, film making. This had facilitated pupil choice and enjoyment.

The school had made strenuous efforts to take an individual approach to supporting its young people. Regular meetings of the Pupil Support Team and the Joint Support team had been reintroduced this year to plan to meet the needs of young people across the Learning Community. Over the last two years the school had improved its partnership working. Outside agencies such as Glasgow West Regeneration Agency, YSCA and Culture and Sport had offered programmes of support in school for groups and individuals, for example behaviour support, skills for work and developing self confidence through Columba 1400 Leadership Academy. To meet the social and emotional needs of young people the school had employed the services of an independent counsellor. Currently over 70 young people have self-referred.

A new policy to meet the specific needs of looked after children had been written and implemented. Their records were updated on a monthly basis and target setting for these young people was systematically monitored and recorded on a regular basis.

The school had introduced a Nurture Room to meet the needs of some of its young people with developmental issues. Two members of staff had been trained in nurturing principles and a number of other staff had engaged in dyslexia training to support young people better.

The school and in particular the staff of the English as an Additional Language department, had been commended for its approach to meeting the needs of immigrant children in the HMIe 2009 publication 'Count us In'.

Main point for action 3

Strengthen the strategic role of senior managers in order to track the impact of key initiatives, strengthen links with departments and coordinate integrated support for pupils.

The school had made very good progress towards this target.

The Senior Leadership of the school had played a significant role in delivering a shared vision for the school through the creation of a revised vision, values and aims. A new

and strategic approach to school improvement planning had been implemented in line with Glasgow City Council guidelines. Remits for the Senior Leadership had been revised and now included a clear responsibility for Learning and Teaching and Quality Assurance. This had been communicated to staff, young people and their parents/carers and had lent greater clarity and effectiveness to their roles.

Their role had been further strengthened through regular operational and strategic planning meetings and the introduction of daily assemblies had allowed Deputes to lead their individual year groups more effectively.

Along with the headteacher, deputies had been allocated a key role in the development of learning and teaching. The deputy headteachers now play a key role in the quality assurance of the school, especially with their link departments to which they had been newly appointed, and have a responsibility for managing and quality assuring the reporting and assessment process and the monitoring of the School Improvement Plan. Deputy headteachers now have very clear and strengthened roles in relation to monitoring and tracking progress across their year groups. Senior Leaders had begun to play an active part in leading the reviews of departmental action plans. A regular programme of meetings of Deputes and Principal Teachers and departments had been established to monitor progress in all areas of departmental performance and in particular, performance in SQA examinations. They had supported their link departments in the creation of SQA action plans and class visits. The enhanced role of deputy headteachers had led to greater departmental accountability for performance.

The deputy headteacher with responsibility for Pupil Support had created a vision for a holistic approach to pupil support. This had been shared with all stakeholders. Pastoral Care, Behaviour Support and Support for Learning had all recently been located at the hub of the school's main building and regular meetings of Pastoral Care and all Pupil Support staff had been established. Planned meetings of Joint Support Teams had regularly taken place. These measures had led to more coordinated and integrated support for pupils.

Main point for action 4

Improve the school's approaches to self-evaluation including planning for improvement and tracking pupils' progress across and within departments.

The school had made satisfactory progress towards this target.

The school had established a self-evaluation working group to review procedures and make recommendations, including the development of an Evaluation and Monitoring calendar. The school had in place a process whereby all whole school events are systematically recorded and rigorously evaluated. For the last two years HMIE questionnaires had been issued at every parents evening. Feedback from these questionnaires had provided useful information which had impacted positively on the attendance at parents' evenings.

The school had involved stakeholders in self-evaluation and had developed ways of gathering their views. Parents had volunteered to be part of focus groups and the new pupil council, following full consultation with all pupils, had presented a paper to the Senior Leadership Team about their views on improving the school. The majority of staff had met with the headteacher as a means of sampling their views on taking the school forward. This information had been used to inform the School Improvement Plan.

The school had adopted Glasgow City Council's template for Improvement Planning and Department action plans using these templates had been implemented. All staff had been trained in Departmental action planning by the authority and this had

enabled a consistent school approach to improvement planning. This will be helpful as the school prepares to implement a new three-year strategic improvement plan. However, the school's monitoring of departmental action plans had shown that the quality of the action plans were variable and the school will continue to monitor and support departments in this area. Nevertheless some departments had indicated that school improvement planning had improved and was being monitored more effectively than previously.

Overall procedures for Quality Assurance had improved but there had still been a lack of consistency across departments which the school was addressing. There are examples of good practice within a few departments where there is a culture of embracing change and improvement on which the school has been building including regular departmental meetings with a focus on learning and teaching and raising attainment. The use of HGIOS 3 in most departments had improved.

The school had taken a more systematic and rigorous approach to monitoring and tracking pupil progress in years S4-6 and will plan to implement this in S1-3. All staff were now aware of the profile grades of young people and had been able to target support more appropriately. All senior leaders, middle managers and some staff had been formally trained in the use of standard tables and this had enabled a more thorough analysis of departmental SQA performance and had assisted in the formulation of action plans.

4. Conclusion and Next Steps

Overall the school had made good progress, and in most areas, very good progress, in addressing the recommendations of the HMIE report of January 2008. Under the leadership of the new headteacher and the new Senior Leadership Team there had been a more rigorous and systematic approach to quality assurance and improvement planning and a very clear focus on maximising achievement for all. As a result, the school's capacity for further improvement had been significantly enhanced.

Staff commitment and openness to continuing professional development and sharing of good practice had resulted in improvements in the quality of pupils' learning experiences and laid a solid foundation to further raise attainment and to continue to enhance all aspects of the life and work of the school community.

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