



Follow-through Inspection Report

St Andrew's Secondary School

June 2008

The Inspection

In February 2006, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) inspected St Andrew's Secondary School as part of a national sample of secondary education. The report was published in June 2006 and highlighted strengths and points for action. Working with the education authority, the school prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the points for action identified in the report. The plan outlined tasks, timescales and resources as well as the criteria for monitoring and evaluating success. This was shared with parents.

Officers from Education Services visited the school at various times since the publication of the report to assess 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.

Continuous Improvement

The school had responded to the report in a very professional and focused manner. The head teacher had continued to provide strong leadership and clear vision. Senior managers and principal teachers, with the full cooperation and commitment of staff, had reviewed and revised aspects of the curriculum and support for learning with a view to raising attainment. All staff had shown a willingness to address the areas identified for improvement.

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 by drawing on good practice and sharing this throughout the school.

The school continued to place a strong emphasis on raising the attainment of all young people. By the end of S4, the school continued to perform much better than similar schools. The proportion of young people achieving an award in English or mathematics at SCQF level 3 or better had improved. Commendably, the proportion of young people achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better was now in line with the national average. By the end of S5, the school continued to perform much better than similar schools. However, there was a decline in the proportion of young people achieving five or more Highers. By the end of S6, attainment had declined, however, the school had tracked the progress of these young people very effectively since S1 and attainment was predicted to increase in 2008.

The school continued to place a high priority on promoting young people's wider achievements. Young people were able to achieve qualifications in vocational courses at further education colleges. They had achieved success in public speaking, music and drama events and competitions. Some young people were able to develop their leadership skills through achieving coaching qualifications from the Scottish Football association and other sports coaching courses. A number of young people had achieved sporting success at school, city and international level. The school continued to provide an extensive range of extra curricular activities including outward bound residential experience, participation and success associated with the school 'Sign Up For Success' programme, involvement in organising events and activities for children and adults with additional support needs, and, active roles in school and local community religious services.

Progress Towards the Main Points for Action

Main point for action 1

The report identified two main points for action, in relation to improving attainment:

Strengthen the curriculum, especially at S1/S2.

The school had made very good progress towards meeting this main point for action.

The school had taken forward a wide range of measures to strengthen the curriculum and enhance provision for young people at all stages. All courses had been evaluated with young people, who viewed them very positively.

a) S1/2 Curriculum

Young people were able to learn about 'People in Place' through an initiative 'Theme for the Week' and across different subject areas. They were now able to learn about geography in a more planned and coherent way. The information and communications technology (ICT) course had been revised to better meet the needs of learners and its period allocation had been maintained. Teachers had reviewed the physical education curriculum to improve the overall fitness and mental health of young people. More time was now being allocated to physical education.

Additional teachers provided support for young people in social subjects through co-operative teaching. This enabled more young people to make better progress. To better meet the literacy and numeracy needs of a targeted group of young people, additional time had been allocated to the teaching of English and Mathematics in place of Spanish. Parents had been appropriately consulted.

A group of young people in S1, who were looked after, received support through the fifteen week Barnardo's Resilience Programme. An initiative which aimed to develop life skills in young people had been introduced to tutor groups every four weeks.

For some young people in S2 and S3 identified as being at risk of disengagement with school, further education college taster sessions on construction and personal presentation had been arranged. These courses lasted between six and twelve weeks and had been introduced to broaden the overall experience of these young people, help them re-engage with the education process, and enhance their opportunities for success. Impacts on young people included certification of the construction course, greater focus and direction for career choices, and improvements in attendance and behaviour back at school.

b) S3/4 Curriculum

After appropriate consultation with parents and young people, in 2007 the school reduced the number of courses for a group of identified young people. The purpose was to allow for greater depth of learning and to raise their attainment. Early indications have suggested greater engagement by young people involved, and improved self esteem and attendance. Impacts on attainment will become clearer once these courses have been completed.

A number of Access 3 courses had been introduced to widen opportunity for and better meet the needs of lower attaining young people. Access 3 courses had been introduced in Mathematics, English, Physical Education, Hospitality (also Intermediate 1), Social Subjects (also Intermediate 1) and PC Passport. It is anticipated that this will help to increase the proportion of young people achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 3 or better. In addition, Practical Skills had been introduced at Intermediate 1 level. Young people are targeted to courses in which they will make most progress and find most enjoyable.

Embedding of the core skill 'Working with Others' had taken place in the Spanish Standard Grade curriculum, and had resulted in young people gaining an additional qualification at Intermediate 1 level.

ACE (Achieving Confident and Educated) classes had been introduced for identified young people to improve literacy and overall life skills. ACE had allowed young people with particular literacy needs to make progress in an environment of trust, with the help of peers and the class teacher. Young people indicated their appreciation of the programme as interesting, exciting and enjoyable, and that it helped them cope better with the formal English curriculum.

In 2007, a number of measures had been introduced to improve positive destinations for young people leaving school. School staff had introduced skills for work courses in Early Years and Childcare, and, Sport and Recreation. For lower attaining young people, the Science department had introduced a course to enable them to achieve the Health and Safety Executive Workplace Safety Certificate. In Personal and Social Education, employability classes had been introduced. These initiatives are being closely monitored to ensure that they result in improved destinations for the young people involved.

The school had developed effective partnerships with further education colleges to enable young people to take a range of vocational courses as part of their planned curriculum. Young people achieved additional qualifications as part of these courses.

Rigorous tracking of young people on alternative placements had been introduced. Records of attendance and attainment progress are submitted to the school on a weekly basis by training providers. Post school planning has been introduced to support positive destinations for life beyond school.

A Prince's Trust XL class had been introduced to engage young people with attendance and behavioural issues. Young people involved follow courses to develop personal and vocational skills. Both elements are accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

c) S5/6 Curriculum

More appropriate course levels had been introduced, and accredited units had been developed to better meet the needs of all young people. This had included redesigned courses in English and Mathematics, Intermediate 1 courses in Hospitality, Woodworking Skills and Science, Central College of Commerce certificated courses in Building, PowerPoint presentation skills, employability skills, teambuilding, personal and social development, and listening skills in Modern Languages.

The school had engaged in partnership working with further education colleges to introduce new courses, for example Psychology at Intermediate 2 and Higher.

Main point for action 2

Improve the effectiveness of learning support.

The school had made very good progress towards meeting this main point for action.

One of the senior managers, with considerable experience of working in an integrated Pupil Support structure, had been appointed with responsibility for this area. The school had integrated pastoral care and support for learning to increase the effectiveness of all aspects of support for learning.

Learning support had been made a target for faculty and departmental improvement plans, and all staff had been made aware that they were all support for learning teachers. A full day in service programme on differentiation and support for learning had been delivered to staff to reinforce and support this.

Continuing professional development input had been provided on working with more challenging young people by staff from St Aiden's School.

Support for learning had been made regular agenda items in all faculty and departmental meetings.

A working group to develop strategies to support lower attaining young people had been established, and included the Principal Teachers of Support for Learning, Mathematics and English, and, Educational Psychologists among its members.

A number of specific initiatives had been introduced to support young people with additional learning needs. These were:

- Collegiate working by staff on differentiated learning for lower attaining young people.
- ACE (Achieving Confident and Educated) classes to improve attainment for lower attaining S3/4 young people.
- Reduction in class sizes in S1/2 English and Mathematics to allow for sizes of fifteen for classes of lowest attaining young people.
- Core enhancement of time for English and Mathematics in S1/2.
- Revision of the core enhancement programme in S3/4 to increase the effectiveness of learning support.
- Progression routes for S5/6 young people with lower attainment analysed and improved to better meet their needs.
- Co-operative teaching in social subjects for lower attaining young people of all stages.
- S6 young people peer support low ability classes.

Regular parental meetings and contact had been established enable parents and carers to be kept fully informed of support for learning issues in relation to their children. Parent/carer leaflets had been designed to provide information on the range of provision available in support for learning.

The Joint Support Team had introduced monthly discussions on particular young people with support needs, and solution focussed programmes to help them.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Overall, the school had made very good progress towards meeting the main points for action. St Andrew's Secondary School continued to provide high quality education to young people. The high level commitment of school management and staff has been instrumental in this taking place.

By addressing the whole curriculum from S1 to S6, the school had made even more progress on better meeting the needs of young people of all ages, stages and abilities. This was highly commendable and provided an even stronger platform on which everyone involved can work together to continue to develop and enhance all aspects of the life and work of the school into the future.

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