



Follow-through Inspection Report

Smithycroft Secondary School

September 2008

The Inspection

In November 2006, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) inspected Smithycroft Secondary School as part of a national sample of secondary education. The report was published in March 2007 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 regularly 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 whole 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. The senior management team and principal teachers, with the full cooperation and commitment of staff, had reviewed and revised aspects of the curriculum and wider school provision with a view to increasing the quality of pupils' attainment and the consistency and quality of pupils' learning experiences. 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, tracking progress and attainment and improving attendance of young people.

The school continued to place a high priority on raising attainment and promoting and recognising the wider achievements in young people. The annual awards ceremony continued to celebrate a wide range of attainment and achievement, including awards for academic attainment, special awards for commendable attitude, departmental awards for commitment in learning, and, awards for overcoming difficulties, work experience excellence, junior and senior citizenship, and community involvement.

The progress made in raising attainment is outlined in the following section of this report, under the first main point for action.

The school continued to place a strong emphasis on providing more choices and more chances to young people to ensure that they moved to positive destinations on leaving school. Commendably, the school had the lowest percentage of negative destinations for any Glasgow school. This figure was 10% less than the average for the city overall. The

school had developed a range of activities for young people requiring greater support to secure a positive destination. These included:

- Alternative placements with a range of providers, including Further Education Colleges is provided to S4 young people.
- A more targeted curriculum for S3 young people identified as being likely to have difficulty in securing positive destinations after school, involving taking an Access 3 course in French in S3 to meet their entitlement for an award in Modern Languages, and intensive training in the World of Work in S4. The latter involved the Principal Teachers of World of Work and Pastoral Care, and Careers Scotland.
- Continued engagement by young people at the school with the Culinary Excellence programme to develop high level catering skills. Two of the young people involved won competitions in an international cookery tournament.
- Involvement by young people at S3 and S5/6 in training for qualifications in sports leadership, to develop awareness of use of leadership skills and abilities. These had been put into practice when working with the Learning Community activities organiser to organise sport events for associated primary and early years establishments.
- A group of S4 young people had engaged well with local agencies and practitioners to help them develop material and responses when preparing for their involvement in the Glasgow Young People's Health Summit.
- Two S3 groups had started work, in collaboration with Young Eastend Speaking, to establish a Fair Trade shop in the school.
- Establishing support groups for vulnerable young people in S2, S3 and S4 and those who might experience difficulties in attendance and behaviour. The S4 group had gained a national award for excellence in a project organised by the museum service. The S3 group successfully completed a skills for life course run by Firereach. Both S2 and S3 support groups worked with the Greater Easterhouse Arts Project to complete a DVD for use in the school primary-secondary transition programme. For the S2 group, the school gathered evidence which showed that this involvement had resulted in improvements in attitude and attendance among this group. All support groups, including one in S1, benefited from input from local agency Health 4U, to help support behaviour and develop confidence in young people involved.

Young people from the school had continued to demonstrate achievement through involvement in enterprise activities. A group of young people from S1 undertook a French enterprise project that also involved children from associated primaries. The S3 media studies group produced an issue of the local community magazine which was aimed at young people in the local area.

Young people continued to show achievement as a result of involvement in international activities. Young people from S5/6 were involved in an international exchange with young people from Poland. The school had submitted a successful application to Comenius for an international project involving schools in Germany, Poland, Sweden, Turkey and France. The S3 and S4 vocational group students involved gained excellent experience by preparing for exchange events and engaging with young people from partner schools in these countries.

A rugby league academy for S1/2 had been established in the school in conjunction with Easterhouse Panthers, and three graduates from the academy had represented Scotland at under 18 level.

The S2 Young Scientists group won a regional award for a presentation on an environmental topic.

Progress Towards the Main Points for Action

Main point for action 1

The report identified four main points for action:

Raise the overall quality of attainment.

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

By the end of S2, attainment in Reading, Writing and Mathematics had improved. The majority of young people were now achieving appropriate national levels of attainment.

By the end of S4, attainment levels had improved. The proportion of young people achieving five or more awards at SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5 had improved by 5%, 6% and 1% respectively from 2007 to 2008. Almost all young people had achieved an award in English and mathematics at SCQF level 3 or better. The school performed much better than similar schools.

By the end of S5, the proportion of young people achieving one or more and three or more Highers had decreased in line with expectations from their performance at S4 in 2007. Commendably, the proportion of young people achieving five or more Highers had improved by 4% from 2007 to 2008. The school performed better than similar schools.

By the end of S6, overall, standards of attainment had remained consistent. The school performed better than similar schools.

The school continues to be highly committed to raising attainment, in particular at S5/S6. Target setting and tracking procedures had been put in place for S4, S5 and S6. Targets have been agreed between young people and pastoral care staff. A system for monitoring targets at key points in each session had been implemented.

The school had introduced cognitive abilities testing at S1 and S2 to take place in September each year. This information is used to identify strengths and areas for improvement in young people across a number of areas of learning as a baseline for tracking progress. It allows additional support to be targeted to identified young people when ability in the tested areas did not match their performance in class.

Main point for action 2

Improve the attendance of pupils through appropriate collaboration with the education authority.

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

Attendance at the school had improved by 2.5% from 2007 to 2008.

The school had benefited from the services of a recently appointed Education Liaison

Officer, who had proved pro-active and energetic in engaging with young people and families where attendance had been an issue. Highly effective use had been made of the 'parent call' system to contact parents as soon as absence was detected at the start of each day.

Attendance Councils, involving young people, had been established for each stage in August 2007 to address attendance issues. The councils had established a four week cycle of meetings and S1 to S4 year stages had been made a priority. Young people chosen for membership of councils had shown an appreciation of the negative impact of poor attendance and shown an ability to accept responsibility for, and respond to targets to improve attendance. Evidence had been gathered by the school to show the effectiveness of this approach. Improvements in attendance of the young people involved had been considerable. Young people involved showed improved attendance and had influenced overall improvements in attendance in the school.

A further measure to improve attendance had involved the setting up of two support groups of young people in S2, which were staffed by extra staff provided by enhanced staffing to the school provided by the education authority.

**Main point for
action 3**

Increase the consistency and quality of learning experiences for all pupils, including the extent to which the needs of all are effectively met.

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

The school had taken forward a number of measures designed to improve consistency and quality of learning experiences for young people, in terms of curricular organisation and implementing effective teaching and learning strategies in classroom activities.

The introduction of a 32 period week from August 2007 had benefited quality of learning experiences in a number of ways.

- Additional time had been allocated to English and Mathematics for S1 to S4, which had contributed to the improved performance in Reading, Writing and Mathematics in S1 and S2, and improved performance in English and Mathematics in S4.
- An increase in contact time for subjects other than English and Mathematics had been achieved in S5/6.
- More flexible teaching blocks had been introduced into the S3 and S4 timetable, to facilitate the inclusion of pre-vocational education and give longer time period allocations for practical subjects.

Elements of S3 courses had been introduced into the S2 curriculum to better meet the needs of all learners and to increase the level of challenge.

- In Science, young people who had shown themselves to be more able were taught discrete physics, chemistry and biology as a rotation.
- In Social Subjects, units from Standard Grade or Intermediate 1 level courses in History, Geography and Modern Studies were delivered.

- In English, more able young people commenced the Standard Grade course in S2, leading to presentation in S3, rather than S4.
- In Mathematics, young people start Standard Grade in S2 as an alternative to proceeding to 5-14 level F work.

In the school, activity in relation to Curriculum for Excellence had been taken forward in a number of ways.

- A Humanities course had been introduced into the Social Subjects rotation in S2.
- Delivery of specific projects, funded by the authority, in Modern Languages, Music and Science helped to contribute to core capacities in Curriculum for Excellence.
- Engagement by young people in the Burnsong Initiative involved collaboration by English and Music departments, and helped young people develop confidence in public performance as well as success in learning.

A number of measures had been put in place which were improving the overall consistency of learning experiences for young people.

- A cross-sectoral group had been established in the school to achieve greater consistency in the assessment of Writing, and promote more effective teaching and learning in this area. The school continues to have the development of Curriculum for Excellence as part of its improvement plan, in line with authority priorities.
- A programme of regular classroom monitoring visits by school management had been introduced using recording forms developed from criteria in How good Is Our School, with follow up discussion aimed at improving classroom practice to meet the learning needs of all young people.
- Co-operative teaching involving staff from different subject areas had been established to take forward cross-curricular projects, and share good practice.
- Staff were able to share good practice in learning and teaching with colleagues from other departments.
- Seminars had been arranged to discuss learning issues relating to young people to enable staff to collaborate to share practice and devise strategies to respond to the identified learning needs.

The school had commendably prioritised Teaching for Effective Learning across subject departments, and good practice was now in evidence in some departments.

- An emphasis on providing learners with clear purposes and outcomes of learning through 'WALT' and 'WILF' strategies had been established in the English and Mathematics departments.
- In Modern Languages, Home Economics, Technical, the Sciences, and Mathematics departments, self and peer assessment had been established as part of the departmental formative assessment strategy.
- Changes in courses offered by both Home Economics and Technical Subjects had resulted in courses being fully practical and skills based.

- In English, critical skills methodology had been employed to promote group work and active learning, complemented by the use of active and open questioning. Learning target criteria were used to inform learners' work and progress.
- The Mathematics department had developed a large number of lesson starters to stimulate learning, and employed a wide range of interactive activities in the curriculum.
- Modern Languages had developed practice in using a range of internet materials to make the linguistic experience 'real', and collaborative working had been established.
- Modern Studies had placed emphasis on role play activities, presentation of work to peers, tutorial and seminar approaches, and peer assessment.
- In the Sciences, young people had responded well to presentations from peers on research projects, and use of video to critique and assess performances between peers.

Main point for action 4

Increase the impact of self evaluation at all levels within the school, including the development of appropriate systems of monitoring, tracking and improving pupils' progress.

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

The school had taken forward a number of measures to increase the impact of self evaluation and to develop effective systems to monitor and track progress in learning in young people.

Whole school and departmental self evaluation procedures had been revised to take account of quality indicators in the HMIe How Good Is Our School 3 (HGIOS3). Commendably, the Head Teacher and school management team also involve staff in an annual self evaluation exercise, using HGIOS3, to identify strengths and areas for development in relation to school improvement planning processes.

Monitoring arrangements have been put in place for young people in S2, using cognitive assessment testing materials to identify learning strengths and areas for improvement that school staff may use to set realistic targets for improvement in progress and performance in their learning.

A monitoring calendar had been established for young people at S4, S5 and S6 to enable more effective tracking of progress and identification of difficulties to be addressed at an early stage.

More rigorous tracking of young people in S2 had resulted in significant improvement in performance in this and subsequent stages, including S4 performance in 2008. The tracking process had been continued post school with young people requiring additional support in achieving positive destinations beyond school, and had shown success in supporting these young people.

In addition, for S5 and S6, a self monitoring process had been set up to enable these young people to reflect on their own performance and progress in class work and homework in each subject, and identify with their teachers next steps for improvement.

The monitoring of classroom practice had focussed on reflecting on existing practice. Teachers were positive about the benefits of discussion and the identification good practice and areas for development. This was leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning for young people and promoting higher achievement.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Overall the school had made good progress towards meeting the main points for action and had laid a sound foundation for everyone concerned to work together to continue to develop and enhance all aspects of the life and work of the school.

Smithycroft Secondary School had continued to provide a high quality education to young people. The high level of commitment of school management and staff had been instrumental to this taking place, and will enable further progress to be made in continuing to improve the quality of education provision into the future.

Margaret Doran
Executive Director of Education and Social Work Services
Glasgow City Council



Glasgow City Council
Education and Social Work Services
Wheatley House
25 Cochrane Street
Glasgow G1 1HL

0141 287 2000
www.glasgow.gov.uk