

Follow-through Inspection Report

St Margaret Mary's Secondary School

December 2005

The Inspection

Following their inspection of the school in September 2003, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) published a report on standards and quality in St Margaret Mary's Secondary School in February 2004. Working with the education authority, the school prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the 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 September and October 2005 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 has responded to the report in a very professional, comprehensive and structured manner. Staff at all levels have shown a willingness to address the issues which were highlighted. The head teacher has led teachers effectively, thus building on the existing good developmental practice within the school.

Since the inspection took place there have been staffing changes at senior management level through promotion and at middle management level through the re-structuring of some subject departments.

The school has been supported by the authority's Education Improvement Service and school staff have taken advantage of opportunities available for professional development through the authority's in-service programme, in-house training and sharing of good practice.

Overall attainment continues to improve at 5-14 level E. From 2004-2005 Reading performance improved by 5% to 56%, Writing performance improved by 13% to 46% and Mathematics performance improved by 23% to 64%. In 2005, performance at Higher Grade by the end of S6 showed a significant improvement. There was a 13% improvement in pupils achieving 3 or more Highers and a 10% improvement in pupils attaining 5 or more Highers. The results for pupils attaining 5 or more Standard Grades at Grades 1 to 4 and 5 or more Standard Grades at Grades 1 to 6 also showed improvement. These figures were the highest ever attained by the school. Although performance at 5 or more Standard Grades at Grades 1 to 2 and S5 Higher performance could still be improved, overall the school's performance in national examinations has improved in recent years.

Pupils have achieved success through participation in a variety of activities. S1/S2 pupils regularly give presentations at assemblies and pupils at S3 and upwards work with local pre-5 pupils. Pupils studying Drama were involved in the launch of Glasgow's anti-sectarianism initiative and pupils studying Art won a European Design Award. There is a broad range of successful extra-curricular provision including the outdoor education experience of all S3 pupils and a wide and increasing range of school trips to enhance learning. In recognition of pupils' achievements the local MP, Tom Harris, has donated an annual award for Citizenship.

St Margaret Mary's Secondary was successful in a joint bid with Castlemilk High to become a "School of Ambition" and under this programme the school will focus on closing the learning gap by addressing issues such as course choices, improving attendance and employability as well as continuing to focus on improvements in learning and teaching.

Staff morale is high within the school and staff, both new and experienced, are supportive of each other.

The school has demonstrated its ability to continue to improve and has made very good progress overall regarding the main points for action outlined in the report of 2003.

Progress Towards the Main Points For Action

The report identified four main points for action.

Main point for action 1

Develop a fuller and more systematic approach to evaluating the effectiveness of learning and teaching and identifying and spreading good practice.

The school has made very good progress towards meeting this action point.

The school has taken an inclusive approach to evaluating the effectiveness of learning and teaching and this has been well received by staff. A Learning and Teaching group was formed in September 2003. This group issued a discussion paper which was followed by a whole school consultation on the qualities of a good teacher and the structure of a good lesson. Following this, examples of best practice were issued to staff. Staff have received in-service training on various aspects of effective learning and teaching. Teachers have been very open about sharing good practice and have been willing participants in classroom visits, good practice workshops on in-service days and video recordings of their own practice. After further consultation with staff, the head teacher has introduced a monitoring programme with the SMT taking the lead in observing lessons. This session there will be an increasing formality to the structure, involving Heads of Departments, with a focus on specific aspects of learning.

Examples of the overall effect of this successful strategy include:

- In English there has been an examination of teaching and learning strategies to raise attainment, notably establishing aims and objectives before each lesson. This policy is monitored through departmental monitoring procedures. Pupil self and peer evaluation has been initiated. The department is using interactive smartboards in teaching to meet pupils' preferred learning styles.
- In Home Economics a review of all course provision is taking place. A good start has been made in providing opportunities to challenge pupils and in providing opportunities for vocational education. There has been an increase in the provision of ICT throughout all areas of the curriculum.
- In Mathematics teachers are using new resources and interactive whiteboards to improve the quality and pace of pupils' learning and pupil motivation has improved. Staff development activities have increased teachers' skills and pupils are more actively involved in their learning. Teaching is interactive and pupils are given opportunities to work collaboratively. Pupils are spending more time working together on problem solving. A member of the Mathematics department demonstrated good practice in interactive teaching at the workshop sessions in May.
- In Physics teachers have produced PowerPoint presentations designed to clarify the purpose of lessons to pupils. The order of courses has been reviewed to meet pupils' needs.
- In PSE lesson outcomes and skills being developed are shared with pupils at the beginning of each lesson. More experiential and interactive methodologies and materials have been introduced such as use of video, CD Roms and use of the ICT suite. Use of self assessment has been increased and pupils have the opportunity to evaluate the PSE programme.

- In S1/S2 Science the department has introduced the Glasgow S1/S2 Science Programme. Teachers follow the advice in the programme and have improved their questioning to include more open, high order questions with an increase in ‘wait’ time to allow pupils more thinking time. Pupils know what is required of them to demonstrate successful learning. The programme also increases the amount of time pupils spend in group discussion and investigations. The department has also introduced the use of ‘traffic lighting’ by pupils so that pupils can indicate how well they understand a topic. This promotes independent learning. Within each topic, teachers also get pupils to reflect on their own learning experiences and challenge them to consider the effects of the science of the topic on ethical and moral issues in society.

Main point for action 2

Track progress of pupils more thoroughly to provide help in overcoming difficulties in learning.

The school has made very good progress towards meeting this action point.

The school reporting calendar reflects regular tracking of pupil performance. There is a planned series of progress reports, letters to parents and a comprehensive programme of pastoral care interviews for all pupils.

The Primary/Secondary transition programme identifies S1 pupils in need of additional support and they are supported by the Pupil Support Team. Integrated Support Plans have been drawn up for all pupils with a Record of Needs. These plans describe pupils’ additional support needs, identify educational objectives to be achieved, and specify additional support allocated and support strategies to be adopted. Short-term targets have been set in core curricular areas, in conjunction with subject colleagues. This information is shared with all appropriate members of staff and their roles in assisting pupils to meet their targets have been established. Progress is reviewed on a termly basis by the Pupil Support Team. The Pupil Support accommodation has been extended and there is extensive use of ICT to meet pupils’ needs including Successmaker.

Departments track pupil progress and make returns to the Head of Year at key points during the year. In addition SMT members consult departments at departmental meetings regarding pupil progress. After the Prelims all S4, S5 and S6 pupils are interviewed by the SMT and /or Pastoral Care staff. In particular last session all S4 pupils were interviewed with a parent regarding progress and short term targets were set regarding classwork, homework and attendance. Progress was followed up and support strategies identified and provided. Each pupil was allocated a tutor from the school or Education Business Partnership to mentor the pupil in preparation for Standard Grade examinations. Also in S4 high attainers are targeted for supported study opportunities, which are available to all, and this emphasis continues into S5 and S6. Heads of Department have established procedures for tracking and monitoring homework and SMT regularly monitor the use of pupils’ study planners. All staff have undertaken Click’nGo training and the school intends to move to electronic tracking of pupil progress this session. Good practice in tracking from S1/S2 to S3/S4 in Geography was shared at a recent in-service day. This was one of several areas in which staff have shared expertise, including teaching for effective learning strategies.

Main point for action 3

Further reduce the number of absences and exclusions through meeting the needs of pupils more effectively.

The school has met this action point.

From 2002/2003 to 2004/2005 absences have been reduced by 3% and exclusions by 55%.

Factors contributing to this are an improving ethos in the school, improved learning and teaching and rigorous monitoring by the Pastoral Care staff. Staff have been consulted about the positive discipline policy which is based on rules, sanctions and rewards. Support is available for young people through the network of Pastoral Care, Pupil Support and SMT.

Clear procedures have been put in place for all staff involved in attendance matters. Pastoral Care staff work closely with tutor teachers, to track individual pupil attendance and poor attenders are followed up by them in conjunction with the Education Liaison Officer.

The quality of teaching and learning has been enhanced through the development and implementation of the learning and teaching policy and through the sharing of good practice, both informally and formally. Teachers are well motivated and morale is high. New teachers are well supported by experienced staff. By improving learning and teaching and through provision of many opportunities for extra curricular activities, the school has been successful in increasing pupil motivation and in encouraging achievement. There are joint staff-pupil events and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for some activities.

Main point for action 4

Address weaknesses in learning and teaching in the mathematics department to improve attainment.

The school has made good progress towards meeting this action point.

A Head of Faculty has been appointed and is providing strong leadership. She has a clear vision of how to take the department forward and of the strategies required to do this.

Learning and teaching have improved. Differentiated courses have been developed to provide appropriate pace and progression. Courses contain detailed advice for teachers. Credit pupils are able to work on Credit topics in S2 and some Higher topics in S4. Two members of the department are participating in the authority initiative “Teaching for effective learning in Mathematics” which promotes quality learning experiences for pupils and this has had a positive impact on learning and teaching across the department. There is a clear structure to lessons and formative assessment strategies are being introduced. Aims and success criteria are shared at the beginning of the lesson. Teachers are using a variety of activities to engage pupils and pupil motivation has increased. Teaching is now interactive and pupils are given opportunities to work collaboratively. Activities to promote problem solving have been successfully developed. All maths classrooms have an interactive whiteboard and ICT is used effectively to involve pupils in learning.

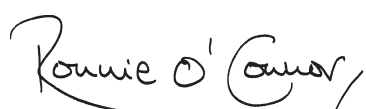
Teachers’ self evaluations are used to monitor pupil progress and inform future improvements. The department has introduced an electronic system to record and track pupil performance and identify their needs. Staff collaborate well both informally and formally and are very willing to share good practice within the department or across the school.

There is a comprehensive system in place which allows pupils to take National Assessments at all appropriate levels. Last session attainment at level E increased by 23% to 64%. To date there has been no improvement in SQA results but the performance of last year’s S3 pupils indicate that improvements should begin to feed through this session.

The quality of teaching and learning has been enhanced by the thorough examination of effective teaching and learning and by opportunities for staff to meet to discuss and demonstrate good practice. An immediate impact on pupils has been the development of ICT as both a teaching and a learning resource.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Overall the school has made very good progress towards meeting the main points for action and has laid a very good foundation on which to work together to continue to develop and enhance all aspects of the life and work of the school.



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