

Follow-through Inspection Report

St Vincent's Autism Unit

October 2006

The Inspection

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education published a report on standards and quality in April 2005 following their inspection of the Unit in December 2004. Working with the Unit, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original report.

Continuous Improvement

The Unit Coordinator and staff had developed an Action Plan to take forward the main points for action from the report. In addition the Unit had continued to improve other aspects of its work.

Additional funding from the local authority had enabled the Unit to purchase the EQUALS curriculum, which had been used to complement existing programmes of study in Environmental Studies and ICT. This had enabled the Unit to plan for appropriate progression for pupils in composite class groups.

The Unit had also further developed its practice in relation to the use of formative assessment strategies to enhance learning and teaching. The Unit Coordinator had provided coaching in context sessions with staff. Classroom monitoring by the Unit Coordinator had identified some good practice in sharing learning intentions with pupils and in providing meaningful feedback to support learning. This now needs to become more consistently applied across the Unit.

The Unit had introduced effective individual pupil target sheets and where appropriate group target sheets. Some pupils had been more involved in the setting of learning targets and target setting had now been scheduled to take place and be reviewed four times each session. Some pupils had begun to participate in the annual review meetings and the Unit plans to involve all pupils in the process during the current session. A consistent format and approach to planning had been introduced which facilitated the monitoring of planning and the tracking of individual pupil progress by the Unit Coordinator.

Planning had also been further informed by the introduction of new assessment materials for reading and the use of the 'Emotional Literacy: Assessment and Intervention' materials [NFER Nelson].

Since the time of the inspection there had been a change in the age, stage and pupil needs profile which had influenced some aspects of the Unit's response to the report's points for action.

Progress Towards the Main Points for Action

The initial report identified six 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

Extend the length of the school week in line with that of mainstream schools and, together with St Vincent's Primary School, increase the level of mainstream experiences for pupils.

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

The school week will be extended to 25 hours as of 6 November 2006. Pupils attending both the Unit and the school will now begin the school day at 0900 hours and finish at 1500 hours. The Unit and school will monitor the impact of this on both pupils and traffic management and will review the arrangements with the Head of Service in January 2007.

The Unit and school had included all pupils within mainstream classes during session 2005-06. This had proved challenging for two pupils and as a result they had reviewed the rationale for integration to ensure appropriate levels of integration based upon pupils' individual needs.

Opportunities for religious observance had also been increased through agreement with the mainstream school to include pupils in termly whole school assemblies.

Pupils had benefited from specialist input from a Modern Languages teacher and were developing their skills in talking and listening in French.

Main point for action 2

Improve further the challenge for higher achieving pupils.

The Unit had made some progress towards meeting this main point for action.

The introduction of the 'I Can Solve Problems' programme produced by Education Services [GCC] had increased the level of challenge for some pupils. Pupils had engaged well with the programme and had made good progress in problem solving. The Inclusion teacher had delivered the programme to all pupils. This had enabled her to provide differentiated experiences by grouping younger pupils with older pupils in problem solving activities.

The Unit had also purchased a Smartboard to support teaching and learning in mathematics and other curricular areas. This had resulted in the delivery of more interactive learning experiences for pupils. Pupils had become more engaged in their learning and had also developed their own ICT skills.

Increased monitoring by the Unit Coordinator of forward plans and pupil work had begun to focus on the level of pace and challenge for pupils.

**Main point for
action 3**

Set clearer and more precise targets within individualised educational programmes.

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

The Unit had reviewed its practice in line with the authority's Code of Practice and had begun to use the authority's new planning templates. The setting of targets within IEPs will increase from two to four times during the course of this session.

With support from the Unit Coordinator and Speech and Language Therapist, class teachers had improved the quality of targets set within IEPs to ensure pupils made good progress. In addition, in line with HMIe recommendations, the Unit had developed group target sheets where appropriate. The Unit had also ensured that individual target sheets were shared with pupils. This had resulted in pupils being more aware of their learning targets.

**Main point for
action 4**

Develop further the level of joint planning with the mainstream primary.

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

The Unit Coordinator, Head Teacher and Principal Teachers had established weekly meetings. The meetings had resulted in improved communications and provided a forum to consider approaches to support the integration of unit pupils within mainstream classes. The Unit Coordinator had become more aware of planned school events and this had resulted in plans for unit pupils to be further included in whole school events, e.g. whole school assemblies.

There had also been an increase in the level of joint planning between Unit teachers and mainstream teachers for both Environmental Studies and Drama in advance of team teaching. The Unit had also introduced topics within the Environmental Studies programme to better link with mainstream topics thus facilitating the integration of Unit pupils for aspects of Environmental Studies.

The inclusion teacher had met regularly with the principal teacher of St Vincent's Primary School to plan for and review the integration of unit pupils into mainstream classes as well as the inclusion of mainstream pupils in Sulp groups within the Unit. The inclusion teacher effectively supported the inclusion of pupils within mainstream classes.

**Main point for
action 5**

Improve the accommodation in the school and the unit.

Unsatisfactory progress had been made towards meeting this main point for action.

Some minor repairs had been undertaken. The problem with water penetration had continued. The unit and school will be relocated within a new build during session 2008.

**Main point for
action 6**

Continue to develop the effective processes of self-evaluation by teachers to further improve the quality of learning and teaching.

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

In consultation with staff, the Unit Coordinator had put in place a comprehensive monitoring timetable, which included classroom monitoring. Staff had developed an agreed focus for classroom monitoring which included a focus on formative assessment approaches in support of ongoing developments in this area.

The Unit Coordinator had monitored the quality of pupils' learning experiences in each classroom and had provided individual teachers with written feedback. The process had identified aspects of good practice, which had been shared with staff. It had also highlighted areas for development, which the Unit Coordinator had included in the improvement plan.

**Conclusion
and Next
Steps**

St Vincent's Autism Unit has made good progress with its response to the inspection report. The Unit was working effectively with the mainstream school to the benefit of both services. The development of the Unit's processes for self-evaluation and increased levels of joint planning with the mainstream school indicate that it has the capacity to sustain continuous improvement.

Margaret Doran

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