

Castlehead High School

September 2007

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Follow-through report to the HMIE inspection of Castlehead High School, Paisley

A Report by Renfrewshire Council: Education and Leisure Services

September 2007

1 The inspection

In September 2005, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on standards and quality in Castlehead High School following their earlier inspection of March 2005. Working with the education authority, the school prepared, and made public an action plan in February 2006 indicating how it would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection

report. The local authority supported the school in addressing the points for action and in monitoring the progress made. HMIE asked the education authority to provide a progress report for parents and carers on the progress identified. This report, prepared by the education authority, reflects our evaluation of the progress made in relation to the action plan.

2 Continuous improvement

Since the inspection report was published in September 2005, the school had demonstrated its capacity to make further improvements in key aspects of its provision.

The senior management team and staff had demonstrated a high degree of commitment and professionalism in addressing the main points for action. They had worked effectively to develop and implement new initiatives such as Assessment is for Learning (AifL) throughout the school. Whole school approaches to developments had led to a shared understanding of the need to improve and meet pupils' needs. Improvements to quality improvement procedures across the school had resulted in a more consistent approach to the provision of learning and teaching across the school.

At S1 and S2 the overall quality of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics had improved over the period 2004/2006.

The overall quality of attainment at S3/S4 had improved over the period 2004/ 2006. By the end of S4, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more standard grade awards at levels 4 and 5 had improved. The proportion of pupils achieving level 3 in English and mathematics had also improved.

The overall quality of attainment at S5/S6 was good. By the end of S5/6 the proportion of pupils gaining one or more Higher grade awards (level 6) had improved. The proportion of S4 pupils who went on to gain three or more or five or more awards at level 6 or better remained below the national average. However, the proportion of boys who achieved one or more or five or more awards at level 6 had improved.

3 Progress towards the main points for action

The original inspection report published in September 2005 identified four main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made in addressing the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and others involved with the school.

3.1 The school and the education authority should improve the quality of attainment particularly at S3/S4.

Overall very good progress had been made in relation to this action point. As part of its commitment to raising attainment the school had reviewed its provision of information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum. The school had plans to extend the provision of ICT across the curriculum beyond S2. ICT had been successfully integrated into the Lifeskills programme where pupils had the opportunity to evaluate and record their own progress in a learning log.

Pupils from S3 and S6 had been involved in the pilot of Renfrewshire Council's Certificate of Achievement initiative. This had been successfully integrated into the Lifeskills programme and will now be extended throughout the school. Pupils had involved themselves enthusiastically in the pilot as the certificate recorded, in full, their wider achievements in addition to their examination results. The school and authority will continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of this scheme on pupils' attainment, motivation and achievement.

Work towards further improving the quality of attainment had been progressed by the development of the school website as a learning resource. This provided pupils, staff and parents with a wide range of helpful support information. Teachers had produced a series of booklets that provided valuable revision and extension work at levels appropriate to pupils' needs. Information on

health and wellbeing issues, advice on careers and study skills were also available. The school will continue to monitor and evaluate the use and effectiveness of the website as a learning resource.

An AifL committee had been established as part of the school's overall arrangements to improve learning and teaching. The committee had effectively identified and implemented a range of strategies to improve and enhance learning and teaching. Significant resources had been directed to staff development in this area with staff being trained in formative assessment strategies. Good use had been made of other continuing professional development (CPD) materials such as learning sets. There were encouraging signs of progress in this aspect of the school's work with further work planned to ensure a greater consistency of approach.

S3 and S4 course option choices had been broadened in line with developments in curriculum flexibility. Most subjects were offered at standard grade. Intermediate 1 and 2 courses were offered in at least eight subject areas including biology, religious education and travel and tourism. Curriculum choice had been further extended by the provision of vocational and work-related opportunities. Very effective collaboration between the school and Reid Kerr College had resulted in pupils being offered new courses such as parent craft. Further extension of hairdressing and construction courses had been introduced, facilitating more places for pupils. Further development, subject to available and appropriate resources, was planned for school-based vocational courses. The school had worked very closely with local business to provide pupils with placements which would hopefully lead to offers of apprenticeships.

Very good progress had been made in meeting pupils' needs through the support provided

by the Castlehead and Oakshaw bases. Pupils attending the bases received an individual education plan which facilitated progress. Collaboration between staff from both bases and class teachers ensured that pupils' needs were met. The school had produced a very helpful staff information booklet that explained the work of the Oakshaw base.

Evidence from consultation undertaken with pupils indicated that they were satisfied attending the bases and enjoyed the learning environment. Close monitoring of pupils' reports had showed that they were making very good progress with almost all achieving the targets set for them. Teachers working collaboratively with pupils had identified learning needs and next steps to ensure appropriate progression. Parents' comments provided evidence of satisfaction with the work undertaken by the bases and the progress made by their child.

3.2 The school and the education authority should bring the diverse parts of support into a more integrated structure.

The school had made very good progress in this point for action. Work between staff from guidance, learning support, support bases, and behaviour support had been better integrated to ensure a more coherent structure was in place to support pupils.

There was overall greater collaboration between staff which had resulted in a more shared understanding among departments with a more cohesive approach taken in dealing with pupils' needs. The school worked closely with external agencies such as the educational psychologist, school nurse and home-link team to ensure that support to pupils was both timely and appropriate.

Close working with the associated primary schools allowed staff to gather relevant information about pupils' needs with regards to behaviour and learning difficulties. Guidance staff produced a summary of

information for all staff ensuring a more informed transition to secondary school with more appropriate support for pupils at this crucial stage as well as determining class structures for the year group.

Effective tracking and procedures provided very good evidence of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the provision made for pupils and monitored the progress they had made.

3.3 The school and the education authority should continue to use curriculum flexibility to develop an alternative curriculum for the small number of pupils not reaching their full potential from the current provision.

The school had made very good progress with this point for action.

The range of vocational programmes offered by Reid Kerr College and accessed by pupils had been extended and developed. These courses included hairdressing, sport and recreation, construction and two-dimensional computer animation as well as many others. The school had also worked in partnership with Reid Kerr College and the University of Paisley to offer the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL).

The school had successfully provided a pilot course in personal finance certificated by the Institute of Financial Services. In addition, an excellent partnership with the City and Guilds of London Institute had been developed resulting in the school becoming an accredited presenting centre. Fourteen pupils had been presented for the new City and Guilds course in retail, with all being successful in gaining an award.

Contacts fostered by the school and the local business community had resulted in the provision of alternative opportunities for vocational training for pupils. There were now good opportunities through the continued development of this alternative

provision for an identified group of pupils who were underachieving to achieve and enjoy meaningful success. The further development of individual timetables had allowed the flexibility for pupil participation in these schemes set up jointly by the school and the business community. The school planned to extend these approaches in the future by providing in-school vocational programmes where feasible.

3.4 The school and the education authority should continue to develop greater consistency and rigour in its approaches to self-evaluation, including identifying and promoting best practices in learning and teaching and raising attainment.

The school had made very good progress in relation to this point for action. The quality assurance calendar clearly indicated the overall range of monitoring and evaluation strategies undertaken throughout the year. These included analysis of SQA examination results and close monitoring of the curriculum and pupils' achievement. Meetings were held between heads of departments and the senior management team at the beginning of each school year to discuss learning and teaching, staff development, department development plans, attainment and curricular provision. Evidence from the review calendars of departments such as guidance and religious and moral education clearly indicated the range of monitoring taking place. This included pupil reports, pupil topic evaluations, staff evaluations and departmental monitoring.

In general, departments made good use of information gained from staff and pupil evaluations in monitoring the quality of courses and teaching. These focused audits provided valuable evidence and staff were able to make informed changes to both teaching methodology and course content as a result.

Through its tracking system, the school carefully monitored the performance of pupils, including those at risk of not completing

internal assessments or those who may not turn up for the external examination. Good systems of communication had been established with parents. The school had developed an effective early warning referral system that enabled staff to highlight any concerns they might have regarding pupils to the senior management team.

Departments had implemented systems for tracking pupils' attainment in their course work. This resulted in pupils' needs being identified and suitable strategies such as appropriate homework being used to support them.

Across the school, departments had undertaken close evaluation of their practice resulting in a wide range of initiatives being put in place. Some teachers had taken part in peer assessment that led to meaningful discussions on methodology. Other staff, for example in the maths and English departments, had used various AifL strategies and shared best practice with colleagues. Some departments, such as RME, identified and developed specific methodologies that were appropriate to the needs of teachers and pupils.

Overall, this work had positively impacted on teaching and learning and evidence from pupils' evaluation of courses and homework showed satisfaction. Teachers had responded to these comments from pupils by ensuring appropriate action was taken to review any programme that was not evaluated as satisfactory.

The school had begun to update its quality assurance policy in line with the initiatives outlined in A Curriculum for Excellence.

3.5 Inspected Departments

Further to the four main points of action, specific issues were raised in the work of the particular departments inspected. The responses to these issues are detailed below.

Mathematics

The department had made very good progress in addressing the issues raised in the original inspection report. All teachers had participated in staff development in AifL and had successfully implemented strategies such as providing verbal feedback to pupils, rewarding success, and setting targets. In particular, written feedback had been successfully provided for S1 pupils.

As a result of improved consultation, pupils were more engaged in their learning. They were more involved in analysing their progress at crucial points in their education such as at the end of S3 and S4/S5 preliminary examinations and were now more aware of what they needed to do to improve their performance.

Overall, there were more opportunities for pupils to be challenged in their maths activities. The department had established the 'Wee Red Box', a maths club and weekly visits to the Success Maker suite to promote and stimulate interest in mathematics. Extension activities linked to the maths planners were used to challenge pupils at S1 and S2. Arithmetic challenge sheets suitable for all 5-14 levels had been produced. The use of past papers and the involvement in national maths challenges at S1-S6 provided pupils with a wide range of activities designed to develop their mathematical skills and knowledge.

The department had introduced setting at S1. This had ensured that the pace of learning was appropriate for all pupils. Class structure was based on knowledge of pupils' prior progress at P7 and assessments undertaken by the maths department. Further refinement to classes

was undertaken, where necessary, following a settling in period.

Other initiatives introduced included an early start to the Standard Grade Credit course in S2 and an early start to the Higher grade course in S4. These newer initiatives would be monitored and further developed to ensure their effectiveness.

The department had made very good progress in improving the overall quality of pupils' attainment. At Standard Grade, the proportion of S4 pupils gaining awards at General levels over the period 2004/2006 was broadly in line with the national average. By the end of S6, the proportion of pupils gaining A-C awards at Intermediate 1 had improved and was well above the national average. The overall quality of attainment at Intermediate 2 had also improved and was well above the national average. At Higher, the proportion of pupils achieving A-C grades had improved significantly over the same period and was now in line with the national average.

Religious and moral education

The department continued to make very good progress in addressing the issues identified in the original inspection report. It had reviewed, further developed and refined programmes of work to include more opportunities for pupil discussion and debate within the prescribed topics at S1 and S2. Pupils had benefited from this as well as the provision of well thought-out differentiated materials. These materials provided pupils with both support and challenge in their topic work and had provided very good opportunities for discussion and debate.

Importantly, a review of teaching methodologies had resulted in greater use of AifL and critical skills strategies. This had enabled teachers within the department to provide a more consistent learning environment. The use of ICT continued to be appropriately used to enhance learning and teaching.

Teachers continued to develop interesting and enjoyable learning experiences for pupils such as visits to mosques and involvement in the holocaust memorial day as well as fundraising to sponsor two children from developing countries (or less economically developed countries). Evidence from evaluations organised by the department showed that pupils were satisfied with the range and type of activities provided by teachers.

At Standard Grade, the proportion of pupils achieving Credit awards over the period 2004/2006 continued to be above the national average. By the end of S6, most pupils who were presented at Intermediate 2 achieved A-C grades. At Higher, the proportion of pupils gaining an award at A-C continued to be well above the national average. Pupils presented in Higher philosophy continued to achieve well with all pupils presented gaining an award at levels A-C.

English

Very good progress had been made by the department in extending pupils' language and reading skills by further developing homework programmes at S1 and S2. These programmes provided pupils with regular opportunities to work at three levels of attainment based on the basic skills of literacy and vocabulary. Pupils had found these programmes very helpful and particularly enjoyed being able to assess their own work as well as cross mark the work of their peers.

The department had reviewed its policy on promoting independent learning and, consequently, pupils now had more opportunity to work independently. Good examples of independent learning included encouraging P7 pupils from the cluster primaries to undertake a book or film review prior to attending secondary and the development of a teaching framework for S1 and S2 pupils to encourage them to develop independent work in writing. In addition, an interactive topic approach to teaching

English at S1 and S2 had resulted in pupils taking more responsibility for their learning by encouraging independent thinking and collaborative working.

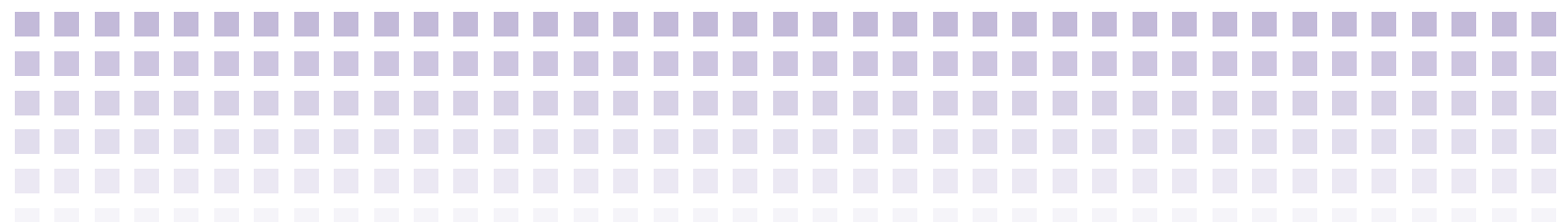
Very good progress had been made in raising attainment in Reading and Writing at S1-S2.

A very successful paired reading club had been developed for both able pupils as well as those requiring additional support. The Castlehead Big Base initiative targeted pupils that required additional support in modern languages as well as basic spelling, reading and writing skills. Both of these initiatives effectively contributed to raising the overall quality of pupils' attainment.

Pupils at S4 had been successfully involved in a personal reading project that included reading fiction and non-fiction materials. Pupils were encouraged to take more responsibility for organising and reviewing their work.

Teachers had made good progress in consolidating new learning or skills at the end of lessons. Staff discussion sessions after classes had provided good opportunities for staff to discuss how lessons had progressed. Some staff had participated in peer observation and collegiate working. Further work in this area of staff development was planned. Implementation of AifL strategies had progressed well and had focused on self-and peer-assessment and more effective questioning to test pupils' understanding of what they had learned.

The department had made very good progress in improving the overall quality of pupils' attainment. At Standard Grade, the proportion of pupils gaining Credit awards had improved over the period 2004/2006. At Intermediate 1, pupils' performance had improved considerably and was now in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving A-C grades in Intermediate 2 had also improved over the same period and was now above the national average. At Higher the proportion of pupils



gaining awards at A-C grades had improved as had the proportion of pupils achieving an A grade.

Home Economics

The department had continued to make very good progress in improving pupils' learning experiences. More consistent and effective use had been made of AifL teaching and learning strategies. These included more focused questioning during and at the end of lessons to check pupils' understanding of their tasks; ensuring that learning outcomes were explicit and understood; and the recap of lessons to reinforce the main points that had been covered throughout the lesson.

Pupils had been given greater opportunity to discuss and offer opinions about their tasks. This had been particularly successful during the block of health lessons at S1 and S2 with topics such as drug awareness and personal safety.

Teachers had introduced peer assessment for practical tasks, for example at S1 in 'Making a fresh fruit salad' and at S2 in 'Lift and Go'. Teachers provided helpful written feedback to pupils, and pupils were encouraged to review and improve their own work as well as that of their peers.

Pupil's evaluation of their lessons had enabled teachers to adapt and improve methodologies and lesson content.

Teachers had successfully developed a variety of strategies to encourage pupils to learn more independently and take more responsibility for their own learning. Teachers had devised lessons that provided more opportunity for pupils to engage in research and investigation.

The department had continued to provide a high quality learning experience for pupils. The healthy lifestyles programme had been developed further through the Hungry for Success programme. The hospitality courses offered vocational opportunities through

excellent links with Glasgow Metropolitan College and Reid Kerr College. Homework tasks for S1 to S3 were carefully planned and provided pupils with the opportunity to consolidate their learning about healthy foods, Scottish foods, hygiene and safety in the kitchen. Pupils studying courses at Intermediate 1 and Intermediate levels 2 were provided with enjoyable and stimulating revision tasks and project work.

Within the school the department continued to contribute to important school events such as the Burns Supper and the schools careers convention.

The Heartstart programme continued to be successful with almost all pupils at S2 achieving a certificate for their work.

Almost all S4 pupils presented at Intermediate 1 hospitality courses achieved A-C grades. Similarly at S5/S6 almost all pupils achieved A-C grades with a high proportion achieving an award at grade A.



4 Conclusion

The school had made very good progress in responding to the main points for action identified in the original inspection report. Developments in learning and teaching, self-evaluation and the provision of greater subject choice were contributing to improving pupils' learning experiences.

The school was now well placed to build on its good work and improve further. The move to temporary accommodation during the planned refurbishment of Castlehead High school will present challenges in the short term. However, the excellent team work, high staff morale and very strong relationships between senior managers and staff should ensure that the school is well positioned to meet these challenges and to move forward with clear vision and a strong sense of purpose.

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How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the head teacher and school staff, the school board, the Director of Education and Leisure Services, and local councillors. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from the address below or by telephoning **0141 842 5882**. Copies are also available on our web site: www.renfrewshire.gov.uk.

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of this report, you should write in the first instance to John Rooney, Director of Education and Leisure Services at:

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