

**Kincorth Academy
Aberdeen City Council
25 January 2005**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on Standards and Quality in Kincorth Academy in June 2003. Working with the school, the education authority prepared and made public an action plan in October 2003, indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report published in June 2003. Since the inspection, HMIE have continued to engage with the headteacher and the education authority in reviewing the steps being taken to improve the school.

An inspection team revisited the school in September 2004 to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

In June 2003, following the inspection, the education authority had carried out an extensive quality review of the school which involved a particular focus on discipline, ethos and leadership. The headteacher had found this process both helpful and supportive, and he had openly shared the findings of the review with staff.

HMIE conducting the inspection visit of September 2004 judged that the headteacher and his staff had demonstrated a strong commitment in working together to improve the school.

At S1/S2, the school had significantly improved pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics, and to a lesser extent in writing. Some improvement had also taken place in S3/S4, with a greater proportion of pupils achieving Credit awards at Standard Grade. The school's overall performance at Higher in S5/S6 was, however, unchanged and still well below national averages. In most of the inspected subjects, examination results had improved at Standard Grade and Higher.

The school had continued to promote and extend pupils' wider achievements and personal and social development through various extra-curricular activities, including sporting competitions, performing arts, enterprise activities and trips abroad. A new team-building event had been introduced for pupils entering S1, and the school continued to make efforts to interest abler pupils in going on to university.

Major work was being done to try to improve the climate and relationships in the school. Staff had been widely consulted on discipline issues and a greater sense of teamwork in addressing these issues was emerging. Pupils had been actively involved in agreeing a set of "ground rules" for good behaviour. Greater attention was being given to monitoring discipline referrals and the use of exclusions. The school had improved its provision for supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties. A "remove" facility had been created for the extraction of poorly-behaved pupils from class. Whilst this facility was fairly effective in defusing some difficult situations, insufficient provision was made for the pupils concerned to keep up with their normal classwork. The control of pupils in and around the school had been improved, and there were signs of improvement in general behaviour. Late-coming by pupils had been reduced.

Overall, the school had enhanced its capacity for improvement. The morale of the staff was generally better and relationships between staff and the senior management team (SMT) had been improved. Staff had been more openly consulted and were now actively supporting developments in quality assurance.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in June 2003 identified seven 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.

3.1 The weaknesses identified in accommodation in science and support for learning should be addressed.

The school and education authority were making good progress towards meeting this main point for action.

The accommodation for support for learning and behaviour support had been significantly improved. Work was due to begin very soon on refurbishment of the science laboratories.

3.2 The overall provision and use of information and communications technology (ICT) facilities should be improved.

The school and education authority had made some progress towards meeting this main point for action.

An audit of computer hardware had been carried out and a five-year plan for extending and updating ICT provision was being devised. ICT resources had been upgraded in the library and in the business studies, computing and technical education departments which were all main users of computers. Other subjects, however, were not yet using computers sufficiently to enhance learning and teaching.

3.3 The school should strive to raise attainment by:

- **working with the education authority and associated primary schools to improve the continuity and development of pupils' learning between primary and secondary schools;**
- **continuing to develop its curriculum and courses to help motivate and challenge pupils, particularly those who are disaffected with school; and**
- **improving the overall quality of pupils' learning experiences to ensure an appropriate pace of progress in all classes.**

The school had made good progress in addressing some aspects of this main point for action.

In modern languages and science, good progress had been made in agreeing co-ordinated programmes of work with the associated primary schools to help to ensure that pupils built on their prior learning when they entered S1. The English department was successfully

developing units of work that were begun by pupils in primary school. Some other departments, including art and design, home economics, science, social subjects and technical education, continued to involve pupils in an environmental design project for the Kincorth area. This was helping to extend teachers' awareness of the environmental studies projects covered by pupils in primary school. However, pupils were not yet developing a common core of knowledge and skills before they entered S1. In most subjects, the steps taken to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning between primary and secondary were still too limited.

Several subjects had extended their course provision to meet the needs of pupils who were poorly motivated or had additional support needs. Access to vocational engineering-based courses at Aberdeen College had been extended and developed for some pupils in S3/S4. A successful programme involving outdoor education had been introduced for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A nationally-accredited award scheme has been introduced for others with additional support needs.

The headteacher had encouraged departments to review their methods for raising attainment. Some of them were trying out new approaches to developing pupils' thinking skills or to identifying and responding more directly to pupils' learning needs. A few departments were beginning Standard Grade courses in S2 to increase the pace of progress for abler pupils. Teachers were setting improvement targets for identified pupils. In lessons visited during this interim inspection, pupils were mostly well-behaved and working at an appropriate pace.

3.4 The headteacher should provide stronger leadership in improving the climate for learning throughout the school by setting clear and appropriate expectations of pupils' behaviour. He should also ensure that all staff make effective and consistent contributions to implementing the school's policy on promoting positive behaviour.

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

The headteacher had made a strong personal commitment to improving aspects of his leadership. In doing so, he had openly consulted staff on his management style. At assemblies, he had reinforced with pupils the school's expectations of their good behaviour. He had ensured that teamwork and consistency amongst the SMT in addressing discipline issues had been improved. The headteacher had also put in place a number of important structures to improve standards of pupil behaviour. These included the establishment of clear "ground rules" for pupils' behaviour and better communication to staff about policy on excluding pupils from school. Staff were supportive of these changes.

3.5 The work of the senior management team should be reviewed to provide a more appropriate division of duties, better teamworking and a higher profile throughout the school, particularly in improving standards of pupil behaviour. The school had made good progress in addressing this main point for action.

The structure of the SMT had been revised appropriately to provide a clearer line of referral on matters related to pupil indiscipline. Individual remits had also been revised to provide a more appropriate division of duties. Teamwork within the SMT had been improved. The

headteacher and his colleagues were adopting a higher profile in and around the school in managing pupils' behaviour. The responses of SMT members who were on discipline duty were now more effective and consistent. Guidance staff were now spending more time on pastoral care for all pupils and less time on matters related to pupil misbehaviour.

3.6 The school should improve its approaches to quality assurance by taking fuller account of the views of staff and pupils, and by implementing its well-planned procedures for monitoring classroom practice.

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

The headteacher had improved the arrangements for consulting staff and pupils more openly and extensively about pupil behaviour and other appropriate issues. Staff committees, a principal teachers' group and the attendance by some principal teachers at SMT meetings were all contributing to the improved level of consultation. Commendably, the school had conducted surveys of the views of staff, pupils and parents. Pupils had been consulted on the aims of the school and on the "ground rules" set for their behaviour in class. The survey of staff views on ethos had not been confidential enough and only two-thirds of them had responded. However, the views of staff who did respond were significantly more positive than at the time of the original inspection. Staff had been fully consulted on the plans by SMT to monitor classroom practice and had agreed them. This monitoring programme was about to be implemented but it also needed to include the active participation of principal teachers.

3.7 The education authority should work with the school to implement fully the authority's scheme for staff review.

The school had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

The school had implemented the authority's scheme for the continuous professional development (CPD) of staff. A committee of staff had been established to deal with CPD and was developing its role well. A policy on CPD had also been developed. All teachers and principal teachers had participated in reviews of their work. Helpful in-service training had been organised for staff on promoting positive behaviour, with input from external speakers and the headteacher.

4. Conclusion

The education authority had taken very good steps to support improvements in the work of the school. Overall, the school and education authority had made good progress in addressing most of the main points for action. The headteacher had led a range of initiatives which had a positive impact on relationships within the school community. Teamwork at all levels of staff had improved. The school had a clear focus on improving attainment and achievement and had achieved some early success. Staff and pupils were more confident in the management of pupil behaviour. The school was further developing its curriculum to meet the needs of disaffected pupils and there was evidence that the pace of learning was improving. The school needed to consolidate and build on this progress. In doing so, it

needed to focus greater attention on developing effective curricular links with its associated primary schools. In line with its plans, it also required to involve principal teachers more actively in monitoring classroom practice.

HMIE will continue to engage with the school and education authority and provide another report on progress for parents and carers within one year of the publication of this report.

Alan Stewart
HM District Inspector

25 January 2005

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Corporate Director of Learning and Leisure, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Greyfriars House, Gallowgate, Aberdeen AB10 1LQ or by telephoning 01224 642544. Copies are also available on our website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you wish to comment about follow-through inspections

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of follow-through inspections, you should write in the first instance to Ian Gamble, HMCI at HM Inspectorate of Education, 1-B95, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ.

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If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, T1 Spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 0131 244 8468 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk.

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