

**Ardvreck School
Crieff**

1 March 2005

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published reports on standards and quality and on the care and welfare of residential pupils in Ardvreck School in December 2002. The school and the Board of Governors prepared and made public an action plan in December 2002. This was in the form of a newsletter indicating how the school would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection reports published in December 2002.

An inspector revisited the school in December 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 reports.

2. Continuous improvement

Since the inspections in 2002, the school had continued to improve the quality of its work and pupils' experiences. The school's financial position remained strong. The school had employed more staff, for example in the junior house. It had improved accommodation and facilities by extending the senior girls' house and providing an all-weather sports field with security lighting. The programme for games and activities had further widened to include dancing and craft in order to encourage pupils to extend their interests and keep healthy and active. A more rigorous approach to tracking pupils' and departmental progress had led to a range of improvements across the curriculum.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action in the report on standards and quality

The initial inspection report published in December 2002 identified five 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 school should improve the programmes of study as identified in this report. In particular, programmes should ensure progression and continuity from stage to stage.

The school had made very good progress on this recommendation.

All departments had improved programmes to build on prior learning systematically from pre-prep to Common Entrance. For some, such as French and information and communications technology (ICT), this meant minor refinements. For example, programmes in speaking in French and in using databases had been improved. For some other departments, improvements were more extensive. The new mathematics programme gave appropriate attention to developing pupils' ability to solve problems and apply mathematics to practical situations. In music classes, pupils were acquiring skills in creating music. Teachers had put in place clear assessment arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress. In English, there was a clear framework for planning progress from 3-14 with practical advice for teachers on aspects such as resources and meeting pupils' needs. Learning support provided teachers with guidance on meeting pupils' needs and worked with individual pupils. House staff also helped pupils learn how to organise their studies.

3.2 A clear staff management and development framework should be written and implemented in the school. It should include a development plan, and arrangements for monitoring and evaluating provision and for staff development and review. In particular, arrangements for supporting probationary teaching staff should be improved.

The school had made very good progress on this recommendation.

In consultation with staff and Governors, the school had reviewed its mission statement and was using it as a basis for planning for improvement. It had successfully implemented planned improvements, for example to teaching programmes and to arrangements for reporting pupils' progress. Pupils had significantly more opportunities to contribute to decision-making. Senior managers used departmental minutes to identify and share good practice and to provide constructive support. Systematic monitoring of pupils' progress had supported improvements in their achievements. The school had surveyed parents and pupils to obtain their views and used the results to improve aspects of care, such as the quality of the food and access to telephones. Some departments, such as mathematics, made extensive use of national quality indicators to evaluate their work. In addition, all teachers had regular, constructive professional reviews where their contributions and training needs were discussed. The school had produced appropriate arrangements for mentoring newly qualified staff.

3.3 All policies, procedures and information relevant to the school should be clarified and made available to staff, pupils and parents as appropriate.

The school had made very good progress on this recommendation.

The school had produced a comprehensive staff handbook and list of policies, including health and safety, and made them available to parents on request. Records kept by the school showed that a significant minority of parents had shown interest in reading these. Parents of new pupils also received a helpful booklet containing guidance on school routines and policies. All parents were given regular newsletters, the school magazine and twice-termly reports on pupils' progress. In addition, the school encouraged ongoing contact with parents at social, sporting and curricular events.

3.4 The remits of the deputy head and director of studies should be reviewed with a view to their carrying more management responsibilities.

The school had made very good progress on this recommendation.

The remits of the deputy head and director of studies had been reviewed. As members of the school's senior management team of five, both made a significant contribution to school policy-making and improvement. In addition to the deputy's existing management duties as head of music and religious education, and her management responsibilities for human resources, she deputised for the headteacher in his absence. As a result of a recent review of her remit, she had taken on the additional responsibility of managing staff development. The

director of studies continued with his major administration responsibilities, for example for academic timetabling. In addition, he had very effectively taken on new responsibilities for improvement planning and aspects of quality assurance, for example monitoring pupils' progress.

3.5 Training for staff should be improved and, in particular, training in child protection should be provided for all staff.

The school had made very good progress on this recommendation.

Staff training included sharing good practice in school as well as external courses and visits from outside experts. Staff returning from outside courses informed others of their experiences and provided the school with a written record for use in planning for improvement. A programme of regular departmental meetings had been introduced and these ensured that staff had regular opportunities to exchange good practice. At professional review meetings, staff were encouraged to undertake training which took account of school and individual development needs. For example, staff training was provided after an audit of information and communication technology, including staff competences. All staff had received helpful training in child protection. Appropriate arrangements for induction of new staff were in place.

4. Progress towards meeting the main points for action in the report on the care and welfare of residential pupils

The initial inspection report published in December 2002 identified five 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.

4.1 A clear staff management and development framework should be established for the residences. It should include a development plan, and arrangements for monitoring and evaluating provision and for staff development and review.

The school had made very good progress on this recommendation.

All the boarding houses had development plans with clear priorities for improvement, for example in areas such as pastoral care, accommodation and management. In addition to the regular feedback provided by the headteacher, the school used regular, well-structured meetings of house masters and house mistresses to monitor and plan improvements. The school had successfully implemented planned developments such as improved accommodation, increased opportunities for senior pupils to take responsibility, and improved procedures for dealing with any bullying. To monitor and evaluate provision, it used a range of procedures such as house meetings, analysis of school meals by a visiting dietician, pupil committees, and questionnaires on the views of parents and pupils. Members of the senior management team, including the headteacher, regularly visited the boarding houses and talked with pupils about their experiences. In addition, all house masters and mistresses and their assistants had regular business-like and constructive professional reviews where their contributions and training needs were discussed.

4.2 All policies, procedures and information relevant to the care and welfare of boarders, together with procedures for making complaints, should be clarified and made available to staff, pupils and parents.

The school had made very good progress on this recommendation.

The school had produced a guide for new pupils and their parents. All boarding houses had clear handbooks for staff. These booklets clarified routines and policies including how to communicate concern. A survey of pupils' and parents' views had enabled the school to identify strengths as well as concerns and to receive suggestions. Following the survey, the school had taken appropriate account of parental comments. Staff and boarders each had regular house meetings where they could make suggestions, identify concerns and learn about planned action in response. The successful use of sealed message boxes in the junior and senior girls' houses was being extended to the senior boys' house. This approach provided all boarders with a means of raising concerns or complaints confidentially and obtaining support where appropriate.

4.3 Pupils should be provided with better opportunities to express their views about life in the boarding houses.

The school had made very good progress on this recommendation.

The school actively encouraged pupils to contribute to their school community and develop citizenship skills. The school had set up a school committee, house committees and 'dormitory' committees in the junior house, where pupils expressed their views and contributed to decision-making on life in the boarding houses. Their views were listened to and resulted in improvements, for example to packed lunches and the redecoration of their common rooms. In addition, house staff consulted pupils about matters such as choice of dormitory and outings.

4.4 The issues identified in this report concerning accommodation in the junior house and pupils' privacy and security should be addressed.

The school had made good progress on this recommendation.

Accommodation in the junior house had significantly improved. Provision of new beds with storage drawers had enabled the school to remove bulky storage units in some rooms and thus provide boarders with more space. Additional toilets had been provided. Showers had been upgraded with separate shower cubicles for junior boarders to provide appropriate privacy. The senior girls' house had been extended and senior girl boarders had very comfortable, modern accommodation. All boarders had appropriate access to telephones, including mobile phones if their parents agreed. All boarding houses had appropriately secure entry systems. There was an ongoing programme of improvements to all boarding houses. At the time of the follow-through inspection, the school was assessing how best to replace the communal showering facilities in MacLellan House. These still lacked the necessary private showering facilities for senior boy boarders.

4.5 All staff should receive training in child protection.

The school had made very good progress on this recommendation.

All staff had received useful training in child protection and welcomed having a school child protection policy with clear procedures to which they could refer. They knew that the headteacher was their child protection co-ordinator. Senior managers had established appropriate contacts with social work services for any referrals. Staff had discussed what to do in response to a situation where there were concerns about child protection and were clear about what action to take. They knew what they needed to do immediately to support the child, how to refer the matter for help and how to record what had happened.

5. Conclusion

The Board of Governors and the school had made very good progress on nine of the ten recommendations and good progress on the one remaining recommendation in the 2002 reports on standards and quality and on the care and welfare of residential pupils at the school. HM Inspectors will therefore make no further visits in relation to the recommendations in the 2002 inspection reports.

Jane B Renton
Lead Inspector for Independent Schools

1 March 2005

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Board of Governors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, T1 Spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8142. Copies are also available on our website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you wish to comment about follow-through inspections

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