

**Madras College
St Andrews
Fife Council
25 March 2008**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Madras College in May 2006. Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report.

HM Inspectors revisited the school in December 2007 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

A new headteacher had taken up post in May 2007, after the retiral in April 2007 of the previous headteacher. Two of the seven original depute headteachers had also left the school. An active Parent Council had succeeded the previous School Board. The curriculum for all pupils in S3/S4 now included education in religious, moral and philosophical studies. The extensive provision of enriching opportunities, for example through fieldwork, educational visits and a European exchange, and pupils' wider achievement in areas such as the arts and sports continued to be significant strengths of the school. By the end of S2, a significant majority of pupils continued to attain appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Their attainment in writing had steadily improved. Overall, attainment at Madras College continued to be above national averages from S4 to S6. High-achieving pupils did better at Madras College than in similar schools in S5/S6. Performance was much better than similar schools in S6 at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)¹ level 7 and better in S5 and S6 for the proportion of pupils achieving three and five or more awards at SCQF level 6. Performance was in line with similar schools for the proportion gaining five or more level 5 SCQF awards in S4. Lower-achieving pupils in S4 continued to perform less well than in similar schools. The proportion achieving five or more SCQF awards at level 3 and awards at this level in both English and mathematics was below comparator averages. Pupils, parents and staff who responded to the questionnaire from HMIE were more positive in November 2007 than they had been in spring 2006. However, they all identified the need for further improvements, particularly to areas such as accommodation.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in May 2006 identified four 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.

¹ Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

3.1 Take immediate steps to remove barriers to learning, teaching and behaviour due to weaknesses in accommodation.

Progress had been weak in relation to this main point for action.

There were several improvements. For example, pupils' access to information and communications technology (ICT) had increased and a few areas of the school had been redecorated. The council had adapted the Kilrymont building to make it more suitable for those requiring disabled access. Although senior staff had contributed to a number of business cases for long-term solutions to the dispersed nature of the accommodation, the council had still to take a decision. Meantime, most of the difficulties of the split-site accommodation continued to exist. Despite the best efforts of the school, staff travel between sites continued to have a negative impact on pupils' experience. The fabric of buildings and the quality of furnishings, toilets and security arrangements provided a poor and deteriorating environment for learning and required major upgrading.

3.2 Put in place effective arrangements for consistent and well-coordinated support for better learning and attainment to meet pupils' needs.

Progress with this main point for action had been adequate overall, although progress on several aspects had been strong.

Improved arrangements for coordinating support for learning had given more pupils access to an appropriate curriculum. The school had judiciously introduced key workers for pupils with additional support needs and tutors for S1 to coordinate provision for these pupils. Support for learning staff targeted well-received cooperative teaching and advice at the largest S1/S2 classes. Staff in the department of special education had further extended their provision of Access units and included pupils of mainstream classes in appropriate studies such as the new enterprise and citizenship programme. There had been a significant increase in the number of teachers seeking and using well-founded specialist strategies for managing behaviour from behaviour support staff. A new behaviour for learning policy was establishing more consistent expectations and the majority of pupils responded well to this.

Better links between the mathematics department and primary schools had enabled teachers to build on pupils' prior learning from the start of S1. The school had taken a few positive steps towards providing an alternative curriculum for low-achieving pupils, for example by starting courses leading to Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards for five pupils and extending its links with further education colleges for a small number of pupils in S5. The school and departmental improvement plans showed the school had identified the need for continuing with necessary improvements. However, arrangements for matching curriculum, classroom activities and homework to meet pupils' needs continued to be too inconsistent in quality across the school. A significant and increasing minority of pupils had concerns about the behaviour of a small number of other pupils. Pupils said their teachers were helpful and approachable but pupils at S1 to S3 sometimes found it difficult to obtain pastoral support.

3.3 Ensure that staff with additional responsibilities work together effectively to achieve improvement priorities.

There had been good progress in addressing this main point for action.

Since his recent appointment, the headteacher had clearly set out his vision for the future of the school. He had established a daily presence in both of the school's sites and had created a greater sense of a single school. He had built on earlier progress by revising and balancing the remits of his senior team to give them an appropriate role in leading aspects of improvement across the school. The five deputy headteachers now worked more consistently and harmoniously as a team and met weekly to discuss and coordinate aspects of their remits. The appointment of a business manager had relieved senior managers of a number of time-consuming operational duties. Deputy headteachers now linked more directly with departments and contributed more effectively to planning and implementing improvements at school and classroom levels. They had started to lead learning more directly through their leadership of working groups and through their increased presence in classrooms. The headteacher was developing the leadership role of principal teachers through monthly meetings of the extended management team and through involving them in planned improvements to teaching and to pupils' learning experiences. Staff were contributing increasingly to school improvement through membership of working groups. The recent 'Talk Time' initiative gave all staff an opportunity for regular constructive discussion of professional issues. The school was now well placed to develop leadership and teamwork further at all levels and to engage all staff in consistently improving the quality of pupils' classroom experiences.

3.4 Make effective use of self-evaluation to monitor pupils' progress and achieve planned improvements.

Overall, the school had made good progress with this main point for action.

The school had recently established agreed arrangements for using self-evaluation to monitor pupils' progress and experience and for planning improvements. The headteacher involved deputy headteachers in analysing departmental performance in examinations. These analyses had helped departments make necessary improvements. Deputy headteachers and principal teachers used planned evaluations of classroom experience to provide teachers with constructive feedback and to share good practice, for example at sessions of continuing professional development. Increasingly, class teachers were using focused observations of other teachers' practice to good effect to strengthen their professional skills and improve pupils' learning experiences. The school had strengthened its arrangements for tracking pupils' progress from S3 to S6 and planned to extend this provision to S1/S2 in session 2008-09. The school was well placed to extend its more rigorous use of self-evaluation to the rest of its work, including its arrangements for pastoral support, communications with parents, use of classroom resources and approaches to meeting pupils' needs.

4. Conclusion

The school had made good progress on two of the four main points for action, adequate progress on one and weak progress on the other regarding weaknesses in accommodation. Overall, the school had increased its capacity for improvement. HM Inspectors have asked

the education authority to provide them with a further report on progress on removing weaknesses in accommodation. Parents will be informed about the school's progress by May 2009.

Frances Corcoran
HM Inspector

25 March 2008

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Head of Education, 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, 1st Floor, Endeavour House, 1 Greenmarket, Dundee DD1 4QB or by telephoning 01382 576700. Copies are also available on our website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of follow-through inspections, you should write in the first instance to Annette Bruton, HMCI, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEcomplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 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 (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail: ask@sps.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.sps.org.uk.

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