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4 March 2003

Dear Mr Rodger

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN PEEBLES HIGH SCHOOL
SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

The report on the above school was published in March 2001. HM Inspectors visited the school in October 2002 to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the report.

The school and education authority had made progress with each of the points for action. The pace of progress had been affected adversely, however, by the budget difficulties faced by the education authority since the inspection; and by staffing changes arising from the absence through illness of the headteacher. The acting headteacher and staff had worked hard to maintain the momentum of developments. In particular, good progress had been made by subject departments in addressing points for action in the inspection. From 2000 to 2002, pupils' performance in national examinations continued to be a strength of the school. As a result, HMIE do not plan to carry out a further follow up visit in relation to the inspection of March 2001, but will maintain contact with the education authority about progress with the outstanding issues to be addressed.

I attach an evaluation and brief account of the response made by the school and the education authority to the main points for action in the report.

I am sending a copy of this letter to parents of children currently in the school and the other recipients of the inspection report.

Yours sincerely

Dr Gill Robinson
HM Chief Inspector
Eastern Division

HM Inspectorate of Education

Follow-up to the Inspection of Standards and Quality in Peebles High School

Scottish Borders Council

Main points for action

1. *The education authority should continue to improve the quality of accommodation and facilities, and monitor how well they meet the needs of staff and pupils.*

The education authority had made some progress with this recommendation. More remained to be done.

The education authority had continued a major five year programme of extension and refurbishment of the school. A number of important improvements had taken place since the inspection. The opening of a new wing, along with the refurbishment of other areas of the school, had improved accommodation significantly for English, foreign languages, the social subjects, business management, computing, music, drama, religious education, home economics and guidance. A new learning resource centre and a concourse for pupils had been provided. Progress with the planned programme had been affected adversely, however, by the budget constraints which had affected the council since the original inspection. Substantial building works were still in progress, including the refurbishment of accommodation for mathematics, learning support, science and of pupil toilets. Facilities for technical education and physical education remained unsatisfactory. Hutted accommodation was still in use. Traffic congestion remained a concern for the school at the beginning and end of the school day. Future priorities within the original design brief were being re-assessed in the light of the council's overall asset management plan for education. The optimum capacity of the school and the timescale for necessary improvements in provision for physical education had not yet been determined.

2. *The school should carry out its plans to review the curriculum at each stage with a view to further improving standards of attainment, particularly for pupils of average and below average levels of achievement.*

There had been some progress in relation to this recommendation. More remained to be done.

An overall strategy for the review and improvement of the curriculum had been identified. A working group had been set up under the direction of the headteacher to take developments forward. An initial audit of pupils' experience in S1 had been conducted. Further progress had been affected, however, by the absence through illness of the headteacher; and by the consequent staffing changes in the senior management of the school. The acting headteacher and her colleagues had continued to improve the

curriculum at S3/S4 by extending careers and enterprise education and by offering a wider range of alternative provision for the small group of pupils for whom a full range of Standard Grade courses was not appropriate. At S5/S6, the range of National Qualifications courses had been significantly increased to meet the needs of more pupils. The curricular structure at S1/S2 and S3/S4 still required further review to meet best the needs of the full range of pupils within the school.

3. *The school and education authority should continue to work together to bring about improvements in the provision and use of information and communication technology (ICT) for administration and teaching.*

There had been good progress with this recommendation.

The budget difficulties faced by the council had led to serious delays in the planned provision of computer hardware for the school, under the Government's National Grid for Learning (NGfL) initiative. Consequently, plans for the training of all staff through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) had also been delayed. The allocation of computers had now been delivered, however. The school had subsequently made good progress in managing the establishment of networked computers and determining the allocation of additional ICT resources to departments. An ICT network manager had been appointed. There had been successful bids for funding from a number of external agencies, including Scottish Enterprise, for the development of ICT links with schools abroad, and for other initiatives including the development of the school website, video-conferencing with other schools, the use of e-mail, and the mentoring of pupils through e-mail links with businesses. An ICT working group had been established. Good progress had also been made in the training of staff and with the gradual extension of ICT into learning and teaching, although progress across departments was still variable.

Subject priorities for action

Subject departments had made good progress overall in addressing the recommendations of the inspection.

All subject departments had responded well to the points for action in the inspection report and had made improvements in provision. The *English* department had improved the planning and delivery of courses from S1-S4 and produced a new assessment framework for these stages. National tests in English had been introduced and additional challenge for able pupils provided. In *mathematics*, the S1/S2 course had been amended to include non-calculator mathematics. Strategies for assessment had been extended to meet the needs of all pupils. The S1/S2 *science* course and its assessment had been reviewed in the light of new national guidance, with improved differentiation and challenge for able pupils. Additional opportunities for the use of ICT had been introduced. The *music* department had increased the attention to inventing and the use of ICT in its S1-S4 courses. In *religious education*, the S1/S2 course had been re-designed, with a more balanced and relevant range

of themes, a wider variety of learning and teaching and improved assessment arrangements. There were improved arrangements for the administration of individual education plans (IEPs) in *learning support*. The use of ICT had been significantly increased in curricular and vocational *guidance*.

The school and education authority had made progress with each of the points for action. The pace of progress had been affected adversely, however, by the budget difficulties faced by the education authority since the inspection; and by staffing changes arising from the absence through illness of the headteacher. The acting headteacher and staff had worked hard, however, to maintain the momentum of developments. In particular, good progress had been made by subject departments in addressing points for action in the inspection. From 2000 to 2002, pupils' performance in national examinations continued to be a strength of the school. As a result, HMIE do not plan to carry out a further follow up visit in relation to the inspection of March 2001, but will maintain contact with the education authority about progress with the outstanding issues to be addressed.