

**Carrick Academy  
Maybole  
South Ayrshire Council  
13 March 2007**

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## **1. The inspection**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Carrick Academy in March 2005. 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 November 2006 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**

Since the original inspection, staff had responded very positively to the challenges presented by the report. They had improved the quality and variety of their approaches to learning and teaching, and had raised the levels of challenge and overall expectations of pupils in their work. Pupils' behaviour had improved and morale amongst staff and pupils was high. Although there were still areas for concern, overall attainment showed signs of improvement. There had been significant improvements in some subjects.

There was now much stronger and consistent leadership by the headteacher and senior managers, and a greater sense of teamwork amongst senior managers and staff. Staff had supported the headteacher and his deputies very well in managing significant changes to staffing while also taking forward improvements in policies and monitoring of the school's work. The provision and use of information and communications technology (ICT) had improved considerably. Staff had successfully embedded revised approaches to classroom practice associated with the national 'Assessment is for Learning' initiative. These included the effective use of recap to remind pupils of earlier learning and good use of questioning to develop pupils' thinking. Ongoing improvements to the accommodation and the development of the school's procedures for managing behaviour had resulted in improvements to behaviour and ethos. The school now offered many more opportunities for pupils to participate and achieve in activities beyond the classroom.

## **3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action**

The initial inspection report published in March 2005 identified six 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 and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in the quality of pupils' learning experiences, especially the extent to which they are expected to think and work independently.**

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

Across the school, staff had adopted revised approaches to teaching and learning and embedded these in daily practice. Teachers consistently shared with pupils the aims of lessons and summarised learning outcomes to assist pupils' learning. They provided regular feedback to pupils on their work and encouraged peer and self-assessment. At S1, the school had worked with an external consultant to help develop a system of personal target-setting for pupils. There were now many more opportunities within courses and programmes for pupils' independent thinking and working. There had been a very positive impact on the quality of classroom experiences through the widespread use of ICT, especially interactive whiteboards. Pupils responded positively to more regular opportunities to collaborate and take responsibilities in, for example, enterprise education seminars and school assemblies. The range and quality of homework activities had been improved to provide greater challenges. Teachers had improved further the existing effective approaches to praising and rewarding pupils and celebrating their achievements.

**3.2 The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in the implementation of consistent strategies to challenge pupils and meet their learning needs.**

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

All departments had thoroughly audited their courses and programmes, with particular attention paid to teaching approaches and pupils' tasks and activities. Teachers had made appropriate changes to ensure a more appropriate pace of learning for all pupils. The pace of lessons was now better judged. Lesson observations by senior managers and principal teachers had focused specifically on this aspect and the findings shared with staff. Good practice in providing appropriate support and challenge to meet pupils' needs had been shared. The significant increase in the use of ICT, including pupils using the interactive boards regularly, had raised levels of challenge and met a range of learning needs. Staff had improved and integrated more effectively the provision of additional support for pupils. There were now better lines of communication between support staff and class teachers to target support and meet needs. These included daily updates by email. The school was examining how to ensure that teachers provided appropriate levels of challenge to pupils who were being taught in bi-level classes which contained pupils studying courses at different levels. There was a need to continue to develop departmental monitoring to ensure that best practice was shared.

### **3.3 The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in pupils' attainment at all stages, and particularly at S1/S2.**

The school had made adequate progress with this main point for action.

At S1/S2, most pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in mathematics. An increasing proportion of pupils attained these levels earlier than expected. Overall, most pupils attained or exceeded national levels of attainment by the end of S2. In English, whilst overall attainment in reading and writing had declined, increasing numbers of pupils exceeded the expected levels of attainment during S1.

At S3/S4, following a dip in performance in 2005, overall attainment had improved in 2006 to above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving awards at level 5<sup>1</sup> had risen significantly to above the national average. The proportions achieving awards at levels 3 and 4 had also improved and were above the national average. At S5/S6, the pattern of attainment was more variable. By the end of S5, the proportions attaining one, three and five or more awards at level 6 had dropped to below the national average. By the end of S6, there had been a slight improvement in the proportions attaining three and five or more awards at level 6. As a result of the high priority given by staff to addressing and reducing the proportion of pupils achieving no awards, these had begun to reduce. Departments had improved the advice given to pupils to ensure that they were presented for appropriate examinations. Parents were now much more involved in discussions of pupils' progress and attainment. Overall, while there had been considerable improvement in some subjects, in a few there was as yet no measurable impact of the improving teaching approaches and more rigorous monitoring. The school had recognised the need to look at more creative ways of supporting pupils to complete and achieve success in units and courses.

### **3.4 The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in the quality of accommodation.**

The school and education authority had made good progress with this main point for action.

The headteacher had used available budgets to initiate a planned programme of refurbishment to the school. The education authority had approved the allocation of funding to upgrade aspects of the accommodation and provide new furnishings and equipment. The renovation and redecoration of the ground floor of the old building had greatly improved the atmosphere in that area. The library was now an attractive and well-resourced facility. The first floor was due to be renovated soon. The ongoing substantial investment in additional ICT had been very effective in enabling major changes to pupils' learning experiences. Provision in home economics had been improved, an additional lift had been installed, toilets refurbished and re-roofing work completed. Some windows had already been replaced. Others were due to be replaced soon.

● \_\_\_\_\_  
<sup>1</sup> 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

The heating system in science had been upgraded and plans drawn up for refurbishment of the science rooms. External security had been improved through the installation of closed-circuit television cameras.

**3.5 The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in the behaviour of pupils who were disrupting the learning of others.**

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

All staff had cooperated very well in ensuring more consistent approaches to managing learning and behaviour. A representative working group met weekly to identify, discuss and share new strategies for managing behaviour. The role of senior managers had been heightened to include greater presence in corridors and around the school. They provided more support for classroom assistants in their supervisory role at breaks and lunchtimes. Early intervention strategies were proving effective in managing low-level disruption and revised approaches to teaching and learning were helping to engage learners and reduce disaffection and indiscipline. The re-structuring of the guidance system had improved staff contacts with pupils at all stages. The number of discipline referrals had dropped significantly. Pupils were generally polite, courteous and well behaved. A range of additional rewards and awards had been introduced at departmental and school level to acknowledge and motivate responsible behaviour and celebrate success. This system was viewed positively by staff and pupils.

**3.6 The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in aspects of the headteacher's leadership and the way in which senior managers worked as a team.**

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

The headteacher and senior managers had undertaken a range of appropriate training courses and worked with an external consultant to identify individual strengths and restructure their roles and remits. They had introduced a second weekly management meeting with a specific focus on strategic planning to encourage debate and support productive sharing of ideas. Through a working group and a policy on shared approaches, the headteacher was putting in place new structures to encourage all members of staff to take the lead in areas for school improvement. He had used the outcomes from training courses to direct and influence developments in improving school ethos and tackling inappropriate behaviour. A working group, chaired by a deputy headteacher, had focussed effectively on approaches to valuing staff and pupils.

The senior management team planned to hold regular extended meetings involving other members of staff to support fuller engagement in school improvements. There was now a much stronger sense of teamwork amongst senior managers. Staff appreciated the greater approachability of the senior management team and the more consistent, joined-up approach to management and leadership. They commented positively about the impact on behaviour and ethos of the increased presence of senior managers in classrooms and around the school. The monitoring of classroom practice and departmental performance was more rigorous and effective. Audits of departmental practice and provision had led to significant developments

in enterprise education and the use of ICT in teaching and learning. The headteacher had taken some steps to communicate more effectively with staff and share information and his plans for the school's further improvement. He should continue to use whole staff meetings as well as working groups to build on current improvements and to share strategic priorities and vision.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The headteacher, senior managers and staff had demonstrated high levels of commitment and teamwork and had made good progress overall in addressing the main points for action in the initial inspection report of March 2005. The school now provided an environment which encouraged success in learning and wider achievements and offered many more opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities. Education authority officers had supported the school very well in making these significant improvements, and were continuing to monitor progress in improving classroom practice and attainment. In view of the progress made in addressing the main points for action, HM Inspectors will not carry out any further inspection visits in connection with the report of March 2005.

Jim Bruce,  
District Inspector

13 March 2007

## **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 Director of Education, Culture and Lifelong Learning, 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, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website: [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://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 Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600258 or from our website at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://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@spsos.org.uk](mailto:ask@spsos.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.spsos.org.uk](http://www.spsos.org.uk).

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