

**Elgin High School  
The Moray Council  
29 August 2006**

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## **1. The inspection**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Elgin High School in August 2004. 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 May 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**

Overall, school staff had shown a commitment to improve. Teachers had attended a range of helpful training events to extend their teaching skills as part of their continuous professional development. Some of these events were organised by the education authority and some by school staff themselves. Members of the senior management team and a few principal teachers had benefited from visits to other schools to observe examples of good practice.

Around half of the pupils in S5 and S6 had benefited considerably from the school's "Sound Town" link with BBC Radio Scotland. This involved these pupils working alongside professional broadcasting staff in a fully equipped studio within the school. Pupils had improved their presentation and talking skills and a few pupils had developed their proficiency in handling a range of technical equipment. There were clear benefits to pupils' confidence and self esteem.

The headteacher had continued to be effective in improving the school's provision. He had gained the trust of pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. He had a clear vision of how the school could improve and in bringing about improvements had consulted well with staff, parents and pupils. Working with the support of the senior management team, he had provided a range of useful policy advice and guidance to staff. He had worked closely with staff and had developed a stronger focus on improving pupils' attainment and achievement. This had resulted in improvements, including raised attainment in S1 and S2 in reading and writing. With the continued support of the education authority, the headteacher had the capacity to improve the school further.

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

The initial inspection report published in August 2004 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 Raise attainment at all stages particularly in English and mathematics.**

The school and education authority had made adequate progress in meeting this main point for action.

Working with staff, the senior management team had put in place a range of useful strategies to raise attainment. Based on the results of the 2005 SQA examinations, these strategies had not made a significant impact on raising pupils' attainment. Members of the senior management team now met regularly with principal teachers to analyse and review pupils' progress. Teaching staff in a number of departments had made effective use of consolidation materials to ensure that pupils had a better understanding of what they had been taught. The school had improved its study support programme to include a greater emphasis on promoting pupils' study skills.

In the school as a whole attainment had remained steady, with no signs of overall improvement. There was a small increase in the number of pupils attaining five or more awards at SCQF<sup>1</sup> level 5 by the end of S4, while the percentages of pupils attaining five or more awards at level 3 or better and at level 4 or better remained broadly static. At all levels the percentage of pupils attaining awards remained well below that in schools with similar characteristics. The number of pupils achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 6 in S5 had declined and remained well below that achieved in schools with similar characteristics. The school's projected figures for pupils achieving five or more awards at level 6, based on preliminary examination results, showed some signs of overall improvement.

Attainment in S1 and S2 had shown an improvement in English. The proportion of pupils reaching appropriate national levels of attainment in reading by the end of S2 rose from just below half in 2003 to around two-thirds in 2005. There was a significant improvement also in the proportion of pupils achieving appropriate national levels in writing. This figure had almost doubled from just over one-third to around two-thirds between 2003 and 2005. Pupils' attainment in Standard Grade had remained steady and most pupils were being presented successfully for Standard Grade examinations in S3, a year earlier than expected. The percentage of pupils achieving success in Higher Grade examinations had improved slightly.

There had been no improvement in attainment in S1 and S2 in mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching appropriate national levels of attainment in mathematics by the end of S2 remained broadly steady at around a half. In 2005, S4 pupils' attainment in Standard Grade mathematics had remained steady and there had been a slight increase in the percentage of pupils attaining Higher awards (in S5/S6).

Examination results in English and mathematics remained notably poorer than in other departments in the school, and well below the national average.

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<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

### **3.2 Review senior management remits to ensure greater rigour and effectiveness in self-evaluation, and in improving learning, teaching and pupils' attainment.**

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

The headteacher had reviewed and revised senior management remits, partly as the result of the appointment of a new deputy headteacher. These new remits focused more effectively on self-evaluation and learning and teaching and were contributing to the development of successful whole school strategies to improve pupils' learning. The headteacher had led by example, taking responsibility for discussing and analysing examination results with principal teachers and in discussing with groups of pupils how they might improve their performance. The appointment of additional staff to assist with the management of pupils' behaviour had created more time for senior managers to focus on classroom practice. Senior managers now supported staff more effectively to improve teaching and learning, particularly in linking with additional departments and in offering thorough feedback following classroom observations.

As part of the revision of senior managers' remits, a deputy headteacher was now responsible for the management of all aspects of pupil support. This had improved the coordination of the work of all those engaged in pupil support. Senior managers had begun to focus effectively on self-evaluation and on improving learning and teaching. They had not yet ensured that these systems and procedures promoted the sharing of good practice and consistent approaches in all departments. The headteacher had made a good start to developing the work of his senior team to ensure a consistent approach to the fulfilment of their revised remits.

### **3.3 Make more effective use of attainment information in order to set individual targets with pupils and parents and raise expectations.**

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

School staff now tracked and recorded pupils' progress more rigorously. They shared assessment information appropriately with pupils to ensure that pupils were aware of the school's expectations of their progress. The headteacher and his senior management team used assessment information well to arrange meetings with individual pupils to discuss their attainment. S5 and S6 pupils benefited from regular meetings with teachers to set targets for them and discuss how they could further improve their work. School staff now shared their predictions of pupils' attainment with parents and alerted parents well to any concerns they had about pupils' progress.

### **3.4 Ensure the progressive development of pupils' learning in the personal, social and health education programme and enable staff to measure its success.**

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

Education authority officers, senior managers and members of the guidance team had recognised that considerable work was required to provide all pupils with a consistently high quality of personal, social and health education. The education authority had recently provided additional funding to enable the guidance team to produce outline programmes for personal, social and health education for pupils in S1 to S4. Staff had begun to prepare aims, learning outcomes and teaching approaches for a few of the topics to be studied. As yet, this work had not impacted on the consistency or the quality of the pupils' learning experiences and staff remained unable to evaluate the effectiveness of provision in this area. The outline programme lacked sufficient detail to avoid unhelpful repetition in the topics that were to be covered at more than one stage over the four years. The guidance team had discussed how pupils' progress could be reported to parents but this had yet to be carried forward. Parents had not yet been consulted on the proposed content of the revised programmes.

Pupils in S5 and S6 were generally positive about the quality of personal guidance they had received. The school had not produced an agreed programme for personal, social and health education for S5 and S6. Pupils in these year groups did not yet have a sufficiently coherent experience in this area.

### **3.5 Improve arrangements for religious observance.**

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

The school had improved the links with the local chaplaincy team. Each chaplain worked more closely with an assigned year group and each was involved in taking assemblies. These were now held more frequently throughout the year and were based on themes which engaged the pupils' interest. Pupils now took an active part in these acts of religious observance through playing music and performing. School staff had recognised the need to increase the frequency of these acts of religious observance and had clear plans to do so.

### **3.6 Address the health and safety issues identified in this report.**

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

The education authority had erected a safety fence at the school car park and installed a helpful pedestrian crossing. This had significantly reduced the potential risk to pupils as they crossed the entrance area. Following concerns about poor ventilation and excessive heat in classrooms, the education authority undertook an extensive survey to determine the areas of greatest need. Consequently, new heating control devices had recently been installed in a number of class areas. If these devices were successful, the school and education authority planned to fit further devices as resources allowed. The school had installed new lights and tap fittings within the pupils' toilets. Overall, however, the conditions within the pupils' toilets had not improved significantly. This lowered pupils' morale and detracted considerably from their experience of school.

## **4. Conclusion**

The school and education authority had made good progress in meeting four of the main points for action. They had made adequate or weak progress in addressing two points for action. HMI have asked the education authority to provide, in October 2007, a report on the school's progress in improving pupils' learning in personal, social and health education, and in raising attainment at all stages, particularly in English and mathematics. Parents will be informed of the progress made by the school.

Robert D Barfoot HMI  
District Inspector

29 August 2006

## **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 Educational Services, 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, Longman House, 28 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our website: [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://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 Annette Bruton, HMCI, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

### **Our complaints procedure**

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. 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](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.scottishombudsman.org.uk](http://www.scottishombudsman.org.uk).

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