

**Grantown Grammar School  
The Highland Council  
25 April 2006**

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## **1. The inspection**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Grantown Grammar School in April 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.

An inspection team revisited the school in February 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**

Staff had taken forward a number of initiatives to improve further the appearance and effectiveness of the school. These included the refurbishment of the guidance and learning support departments and better quality accommodation for music, modern languages and the library. The guidance and learning support departments had been brought together and were now working in a more coordinated way. A number of staff had led innovative developments such as creating a virtual learning environment in art and design and upgrading the school website. About one third of staff were voluntarily attending lunch time sessions to help improve the consistency of learning, teaching and assessment. Sixth year pupils actively supported younger pupils who were experiencing difficulty in certain subjects in a well-structured scheme. The pupil council was active in promoting improvement, particularly through its specialist sub-committees. A sizeable community sports hall was under construction beside the school. On completion, it would considerably enhance facilities for staff, pupils and the local community. However, the décor in the majority of classrooms was poor and pupil toilets were dingy and unhygienic. The school did not yet have a costed rolling programme for up-grading information and communications technology (ICT), replacing worn furniture or improving the internal appearance of the school. A number of staff working groups had been established but they had not yet had sufficient time to effect improvement.

Attainment had shown improvements in some areas, but had declined in others. There were no clear trends of improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more awards at SCQF Level 5 by the end of S4 or three or more, or five or more awards at SCQF Level 6 by the end of S5.

Pupils participated in a variety of sporting, cultural and musical activities. These included successful participation in landscape painting competitions, a national science challenge, skiing trips, educational visits to European battlefields and to theatrical productions in central Scotland. The school was working towards achieving health promoting status and the pupil council health committee had raised funds to develop a drop-in health centre for pupils. Pupils undertook projects under the guidance of a locally based forest ranger. The Active Schools Coordinator ran a programme to enable students to Gain the Junior Sports Leader Award. Other students had obtained qualifications to act as pool lifeguards.

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

The initial inspection report published in April 2004 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 Ensure improvements in procedures for evaluating the quality of learning and teaching and attainment, and for planning for improvement, including taking account of pupils' views.**

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

The school, with strong support from the education authority, had drawn up an action plan to take forward the main points for action in the report. Parents were helpfully informed about progress via the school newsletter. The senior management team met with their link departments to discuss attainment. They provided staff with well-presented data which helped recognise strong performance and plan actions to tackle under-performance. Principal teachers in a number of departments were developing systems to track pupils' progress and improve their attainment. In some departments, such as science and modern languages, staff had introduced a mentoring scheme at S4 which helped pupils to set their own targets for improvement. Pupils talked positively about the impact of these approaches on their progress. The two deputy headteachers had undertaken visits to some departments on an informal basis and provided feedback to staff on learning and teaching. The senior management team had not yet established a formal programme of classroom visits or a policy on quality assurance. A deputy headteacher was leading the development of work based on the national programme *Assessment is for Learning*. He had led staff in-service and organised weekly lunchtime sessions on how this programme might improve learning and teaching. This had led to more interactive teaching and greater opportunities for pupils to be independent in their learning. The school had re-established the pupil council and a number of pupils were involved in pupil-led working groups. Pupils felt that their views were valued and were very positive about the changes that were affecting them. Senior managers and all principal teachers should build on this work and ensure that the good practices identified above are applied consistently throughout the school. They should ensure that the expertise and energy of staff is harnessed and that the recently introduced meetings of principal teachers continue. Good practice should be shared and disseminated and built into whole school policies on quality assurance and learning and teaching.

#### **3.2 Ensure improvement in the effectiveness of management through a revision of the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team, ensuring a focus on improving the school.**

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

Following the inspection, the school had revised the remits and responsibilities of the senior management team. However, the headteacher had been slow in ensuring that these changes were impacting directly on improvements, as set out in the agreed action plan. The authority had provided a temporary additional member of the senior management team to help drive the action plan and the remits of senior managers were then reviewed following the appointment of a new deputy headteacher in August 2005. This had resulted in a better

overall balance of remits and a clearer focus on self-evaluation and improving the work of the school. These changes were beginning to impact positively on the work of the school. A deputy headteacher had brought together the guidance and support for learning departments and had engaged with a range of external organisations to provide more effectively for those pupils with additional support needs. Another deputy headteacher was helpfully taking forward developments in learning and teaching. The headteacher had made improvements to aspects of accommodation and staffing. Overall, however, the school needed more time to demonstrate the impact of changes in the work of the senior management team. The headteacher in particular needed to demonstrate much stronger strategic leadership on key areas such as attainment, the structure of the curriculum, quality assurance, and the development of leadership at all levels. Management and communication systems also needed to be improved. These should be priority areas for the school and authority.

### **3.3 Ensure improvement in the provision for modern languages and religious and moral education in the curriculum.**

The school and education authority had made good progress with provision for religious and moral education (RME). There had been limited progress with provision for modern languages.

The school, with support from the authority, had appointed a temporary part-time teacher of RME in August 2005. This ensured that all pupils studied RME up to the end of S4 although there were as yet no opportunities to take National Qualification courses in S4 to S6. Pupils responded positively in classes and showed a willingness to engage in debates about moral issues. The part-time teacher was employed on a supply basis and discussions were on-going about provision beyond June 2006. Staff within the modern languages department had reviewed courses and improved further the quality of learning and teaching. They had linked with guidance staff to provide clearer advice to pupils at the end of S2. There had been a small increase overall in the proportion of pupils opting to study either French or German in S3. However, the proportion of pupils studying a modern foreign language was still too low and the proportion of pupils studying German had decreased significantly. Discussions had taken place between the modern language department and the headteacher about options for languages within revised timetable structures. These had not resulted in any changes since the time of the inspection.

### **3.4 Ensure improvement in the identified health and safety issues.**

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

The school had reviewed arrangements in the playground to ensure that cars did not park in the rear playground. The potential risks relating to the storage of materials and equipment had been managed and reduced. Ventilation in the computer rooms had been significantly improved. In technical education, staff no longer used older machines which had been identified as posing a danger to pupils. However, these machines had not been replaced. There had been no improvements to security arrangements at the school. There was no secure entry to the main building, the two side entrances or the five hatted classrooms. A number of additional health and safety and security issues were discussed with the school and education authority. These included cluttered computing classrooms and the storage of old computers which posed a health hazard. The condition of pupils' toilets was still poor.

### **3.5 Ensure improvements in training in child protection.**

The school had met this main point for action.

All staff had been trained in child protection. The training included workshops and good opportunities for discussion and reflection. The school had provided recent in-service for staff on the requirements of the Additional Support Needs and Disability Discrimination legislation.

## **4. Conclusion**

The school was only beginning to demonstrate progress towards meeting the recommendations of the HMIE report of April 2004. Education authority staff had given strong support to the school to help take forward the main points for action. The senior management team had begun to work with staff in a more purposeful way and there was evidence of improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in departments. The morale of staff and pupils was high. Staff were collaborating in taking forward a range of promising initiatives although some were at an early stage of development. However, the leadership of the school needed to be strengthened in order to drive forward improvements, support the work of staff and ensure that procedures were established consistently across the school. HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school to monitor progress and will publish a further report within eighteen months time.

Dr F Carlisle HMI  
District Inspector

25 April 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 Education, Culture & Sport, 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).

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### **Our complaints procedure**

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