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# HM Inspectors of Schools

## Follow-up to the Inspection of Maxwelltown High School

### Dumfries and Galloway Council

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#### Main points for action

1. *At S1/S2, the school should give a priority to raising attainment, and in particular language and numeracy skills by better identification of pupils' needs through assessment, improved timetabling and wider use of information technology to support learning.*

The school was making good progress with this recommendation.

The school has taken positive steps to raise pupils' attainment in English language at S1/S2. The school has allocated an extra 30 minutes per week to language, provided additional support and introduced personal reading programmes. Assessment information is now being used appropriately to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. At the time of the follow-up inspection evidence was emerging of improvements in pupils' attainment in English language. Staff have also taken a number of appropriate measures in an effort to improve pupils' attainment in mathematics at S1/S2. They have reviewed the course to include more mental work and greater use of information technology, purchased new resources, developed homework and introduced speed tests in numeracy. However, there has not yet been a significant improvement in pupils' attainment in mathematics. Staff need to take further steps to improve assessment procedures and to match work more closely to pupils' attainments.

2. *Building on the good practice already established, the school should work to raise pupils' expectations, increase the number of General and Credit level passes at Standard Grade and improve performance at Higher Grade and in SQA modules at S5/S6.*

The school was making some progress in addressing this recommendation.

All subject departments have taken steps to raise pupils' expectations. Initiatives have included actions to improve pupils' study skills and the introduction of monthly "Recognition of Achievement Certificates". Teachers have taken positive action to ensure that pupils clearly understand their learning objectives and the attainment targets which they are expected to achieve. The school has further developed links with employers and further and higher education to encourage more pupils to raise their personal expectations. The school should continue to strive to increase the number of Credit level passes and improve performance at Higher Grade.

3. *The school should review the quality of pupils' learning and attainment, making use of the relevant indicators in the HMI publication "How good is our school?" The results should be used as a basis for more rigorous development planning.*

The school has made good progress with this recommendation.

Staff have used performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of aspects of the school's learning support and guidance programmes. Principal teachers have also used performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the management of the school. Members of the senior management team have completed a programme of classroom observations through which the teaching and learning methods employed by all members of the teaching staff have been observed and evaluated. The outcomes of these evaluations were used when drawing up the school development plan.

4. *Steps should be taken to accelerate the full implementation of national 5-14 advice in environmental studies, expressive art and religious and moral education.*

The school has made good progress with this recommendation.

Almost all the departments which contribute to the expressive arts, religious and moral education and the environmental studies programmes, have completed reviews and revised and improved the content of the learning activities they provide at S1 and S2. Reporting procedures have also been improved in almost all aspects of these programmes. However, in business studies and religious and moral education this revision has still to be completed.

5. *All pupils should experience religious and moral education in line with national advice.*

Good progress has been made with this point for action.

All pupils in S5 and S6 now devote an appropriate amount of time to the study of religious and moral education. The quality of the provision for religious and moral education at S1 and S2 has also been improved.

6. *Homework policy should be implemented consistently within departments and across the school.*

The school has addressed this recommendation very effectively.

All staff now implement departmental homework policies. These have been aligned with the whole-school policy on homework. Through formal visits to classes members of the senior management team are now able to check homework records to ensure that the school's policy is being implemented effectively and consistently.

**I am satisfied that the school and the education authority have made good progress overall towards meeting most of the main points for action in the report and I am satisfied that progress will be maintained. However, I would like to receive, in September 2000 and 2001, reports from the education authority on the progress which the school makes towards improving pupils' attainment.**