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Dear Mr Vernal

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF MINTLAW ACADEMY
ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL**

The report on the above school was published in March 2000. HM Inspectors visited the school in December 2001 to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the report.

The school had made good progress towards addressing most of the main points for action in the report. Some aspects had yet to be addressed. The education authority's intention to implement security measures and to continue to work to improve aspects of teamwork in the school was noted. HMI will make no further visits to the school in connection with the March 2000 report.

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 Bill Maxwell
HM Chief Inspector
Northern Division



HM Inspectorate of Education

Follow-up to the Inspection of

Mintlaw Academy

Aberdeenshire Council

Main points for action

1. *The education authority and the school should address the accommodation issues identified in this report and improve security arrangements for managing entry to the school.*

While some progress had been made with this main point for action, it had not been addressed fully.

The education authority and the school had made good progress in addressing accommodation problems in the art and design and science departments. No effective measures had yet been introduced to tackle the security issues raised during the inspection. The school was on a priority list of secondary schools which were to have security measures implemented in session 2003-2004.

2. *The school should improve the quality and content of information in written reports to parents.*

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

The school had introduced a new computer system for tracking and reporting on pupils' progress and attainment. The system had been piloted with S5 and S6 year groups. The quality of information provided to parents of pupils at these stages was now much improved. Plans were in place to use the system with all year groups before the end of the current session.

3. *The school should implement more effective procedures to ensure that pupils in S3/S4 follow a curriculum fully in keeping with national guidance.*

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

The structure of the S3/S4 curriculum had been adjusted to provide better opportunities for breadth and balance in pupils' programmes of study. Information and advice on course choice had been modified to ensure that pupils and their parents were fully aware of the benefits to pupils of following a broad and balanced curriculum. Some subject courses had been audited to establish that they met the requirements of the technology and the creative and aesthetic modes of learning. Overall, the school now offered pupils a very good curriculum in S3/S4.

4. *The school should establish procedures whereby senior managers and principal teachers systematically monitor and report on the quality of learning and teaching in classes.*

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

The headteacher and members of the senior management team had established a more systematic approach to quality assurance. Classroom visits and formal discussions had

ensured that senior staff were well informed about the quality of learning and teaching in the school. Almost all teaching staff had had at least one of their lessons evaluated by a member of the senior promoted staff. However, the quality of feedback to departments was variable and should be adjusted to ensure that all staff receive helpful information on the evaluations made by senior promoted staff. A small number of principal teachers had begun to undertake classroom monitoring activities. The school should extend this pilot exercise to all departments.

5. *The school should improve its development planning by incorporating more rigorous and systematic procedures for auditing the work of all departments.*

Very good progress had been made with this main point for action.

Under the leadership of the headteacher considerable work had been done in moving the development planning process forward. The headteacher had led staff development activities for principal teachers to ensure that they fully understood the new processes involved in auditing the quality of provision and planning for improvement.

Departmental plans were now produced to a consistent format and clearly showed their relationship to the school's overall aims and targets. Much work had been done on improving the criteria used to measure success by ensuring that they included clear, measurable indicators for each target identified.

6. *The rector, with support from the authority, should take the lead in developing more effective working relationships between senior and middle management, ensuring that all promoted staff make a constructive and positive contribution to helping the school move forward in the direction identified by the senior management team.*

Good progress had been made with this main point for action.

The education authority had supported the headteacher and staff in a range of ways. They had given advice to help the school agree on how to implement teachers' revised conditions of service, and had provided a management course for some senior promoted staff. The headteacher and the senior management team had given a good lead in developing more effective working relationships between senior and middle management. They had established more purposeful links with departments and had encouraged principal teachers to make a positive and constructive contribution to helping the school move forward. The education authority and school should continue to work to ensure consistently good teamwork between all promoted staff and the senior management team.

Overall, departments had responded well to the priorities for action identified in the inspection report. Some aspects of the recommendation for the English and mathematics departments had not yet been fully implemented, but plans were in place to ensure that they were addressed by the end of the current session.

HM Inspectors will make no further visits to the school in connection with the March 2000 report.