

**Fortrose Academy
The Highland Council
17 June 2008**

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1. Background

Fortrose Academy was inspected in March 2008 as part of a national sample of secondary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the school's work at all stages.

HM Inspectors evaluated how well the school was raising achievement for all pupils, taking into account the extent to which pupils' learning needs were met by the curriculum and teaching. They analysed pupils' achievement in national examinations (see Appendix 3) and other areas, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement. Inspectors invited the school to identify examples of good practice and have provided examples of good practice in Appendix 4.

HM Inspectors focused particularly on English, mathematics, chemistry and S1/S2 science, and technical education. The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

HM Inspectors observed teaching, learning and achievement in lessons and other contexts and examined pupils' work. They analysed responses to questionnaires¹ issued to a sample of parents² and pupils and to all staff. They interviewed groups of pupils, including representatives of pupil councils, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson and members of the Parent Council, a group of parents and the school chaplain.

Fortrose Academy is a non-denominational school serving the Black Isle area to the north of Inverness. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 738. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The very high expectations for achievement shared by the whole school community.
- Levels of attainment, particularly at S5/S6.
- Consistently high standards of teaching for effective learning, supported by the very positive attitudes to learning of almost all pupils.
- The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school, including their leadership of key developments.
- The leadership of the headteacher.

¹ See Appendix 2

² Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?

To evaluate how well the school was raising achievement for all, HM Inspectors considered the extent to which the learning needs of all pupils were met through the curriculum and teaching. They evaluated the impact of the school on the learning and personal development of all pupils in lessons and in other, broader contexts. They also considered pupils' achievement in examinations and other areas, and the school's overall success in sustaining improvements in performance.

Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum was good. It was based on a sound rationale and provided pupils with broad and balanced learning programmes. The school had consulted staff and parents on changes to the curriculum and was developing improved approaches to extend learning opportunities for all pupils. Particular features of the curriculum included the following.

- The school was effectively developing its curricular links with its associated primary schools, most notably in physical education (PE). This was continuing to improve the continuity in pupils' learning experiences from P7 into S1.
- S2 pupils chose from a range of high quality learning activities on one afternoon each week. The school was monitoring the impact of this arrangement on other areas of the curriculum, including personal and social education (PSE), and on pupils' learning.
- Almost all pupils in S3-S6, including those with additional support needs, were offered a wide range of courses that provided appropriate opportunities for choice and progression. The school was improving provision to better meet the needs of a few lower attaining pupils, especially those in S5/S6.
- The school had improved the number and range of vocational courses for pupils through effective links with local colleges. It had yet to fully integrate the delivery of these opportunities into pupils' timetables. All S4 pupils gained helpful insight into the world of work through a week-long placement.
- Several departments enriched the curriculum through a productive and well-established link with a partner school in Malawi.
- Only a very small proportion of pupils studied religious and moral education (RME) in S4.
- There was no timetabled provision for RME in S5/S6. PE was optional for pupils in those years.

Teaching and meeting learning needs

The quality of teaching was very good, and was of a consistently high standard across the school. In almost all classes, teachers quickly established a positive climate for learning. Teaching approaches kept pupils interested and engaged for the whole lesson, and ensured

that they were successful learners. In lessons in English, PE, business studies and art and design, teachers used stimulating approaches which developed pupils' thinking skills very well. Overall, teachers used information and communications technology (ICT) effectively to enhance their teaching. Teachers made sure that pupils understood the purposes of lessons. Staff gave pupils detailed feedback on what they needed to do to improve. Teachers used questioning well to check pupils' knowledge and understanding. They valued pupils' answers, and used them effectively to develop their thinking. Pupils regularly asked questions to clarify ideas, and teachers responded very well to this. Teachers used homework well to support pupils' learning. Pupils were aware of the variation among departments in the amount of homework given, particularly in S1/S2. Senior managers had begun a review of the school's homework policy.

Staff met pupils' learning needs very well. In S1, teachers built very well on pupils' prior learning, particularly in English, mathematics and PE. As pupils progressed through the school, a wide range of courses, including those at Access level, helped teachers to meet pupils' needs. In almost all classes, staff carefully matched tasks and activities to pupils' learning needs. Teachers supported pupils so that they worked at an appropriate pace and made very good progress. They kept pupils' changing needs under review, and gave effective additional support as required. All staff freely gave of their time at lunchtime or after school to give pupils additional support. Staff were sensitive to any personal circumstances that might be a barrier to learning. In particular, any challenging behaviour was effectively addressed to ensure that it did not disrupt learning. The support for learning (SFL) department played a central role in helping teachers to meet pupils' needs, particularly those pupils with additional support needs. SFL staff had a very clear understanding of all aspects of their work, and of what they wanted to achieve. They gave effective support to pupils in class. Flexible timetable arrangements enabled SFL staff to support a group of pupils in the SFL base to meet their individual needs. Detailed planning for those pupils supported them in making very good progress in their learning. The school's effective partnership with a range of agencies ensured that those agencies were very well involved in providing this support. SFL staff were continuing to develop their effectiveness by preparing further staff development and advice to teachers in areas such as dyslexia.

Impact on learners

This section provides an evaluation of the extent to which the school was successful in raising achievement for all pupils. It refers to pupils' learning experiences, personal development and aspects of their achievement in examinations and other areas.

Learners' experiences and personal development

The quality of learners' experiences was consistently very high. Staff had successfully created a very positive and inclusive environment for learning. Pupils of all levels of attainment and at all stages worked enthusiastically and cooperatively with their teachers. They related well to one another and responded positively when given the opportunity to work in pairs or in small groups. Most teachers provided pupils with helpful feedback that assisted them to plan the next steps in their learning. They helped pupils become more responsible for their learning through planning and assessing some aspects of their own work. Almost all staff were working to provide more consistent opportunities for pupils to be independent learners.

Pupils at all stages contributed to the supportive and productive learning environment through their responsible and considerate behaviour. They responded positively to their teachers' high expectations. Teachers treated all pupils fairly and with respect, and took account of their opinions. Pupils were developing extensive leadership and organisational skills through a wide range of sporting, cultural and other opportunities in the school, in the wider community, and beyond. These fostered the inclusive ethos of the school, and provided nearly all pupils with enjoyment and a sense of achievement. Pupils took a lead in organising events such as the Fairtrade coffee morning, and the *Battle of the Bands* competition. A large number of pupils were successful in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, which developed teamworking and personal confidence. Most S4 pupils achieved the Level 1 award in Sports Leadership as part of their core PE programme. Some took advantage of this qualification to become involved in sports coaching with primary schools. Teams from the school enjoyed wide success in the European Business Game. There were many examples of individual pupils being successful in sport and the creative arts. Pupils were aware of global and citizenship issues through a wide range of activities including the school's link with a school in Malawi. A group of pupils had made a short, evocative film of their Malawi experience. This had been shown at assemblies and had very effectively raised pupils' awareness of the issues facing people in Africa.

English

The overall quality of teaching and learners' experiences was excellent. Arrangements for meeting learners' needs were very good and very high standards of performance had been maintained.

Teachers regularly deployed interesting and imaginative approaches, including the very effective use of a variety of media and ICT, out of school experiences, and contributions from visitors. These approaches engaged and motivated pupils very successfully, and deepened their understanding of ideas and language. Teachers explained lesson aims clearly, and asked challenging questions which encouraged pupils to develop their thinking. Pupils collaborated very well in groups and developed their views through well-planned discussions and presentations to the whole class. Teachers worked very effectively with individuals and groups, and gave pupils constructive advice and clear agreed targets for improvement. Senior pupils supported younger pupils very well in class. Courses in S3/S4 were carefully planned to teach the skills pupils required for S5 courses as well as for certification at the end of S4.

At all stages, almost all pupils made very good progress, including those with additional support needs. By the end of S2, most pupils attained appropriate levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. The majority exceeded these levels in reading, and a third exceeded them in writing. Pupils recognised their strengths and learning needs, and were confident, self-motivated learners. Their writing was carefully crafted, and they were skilled at analysing language features in texts they studied. They were developing a sensitive awareness of the lives and experiences of others. Almost all S4 pupils attained General awards at Standard Grade, or A-C grades at Intermediate 1 or 2. All pupils following the S5 Communications course achieved school certificates. At S5/S6, awards at grade A and grades A-C at Intermediate and Higher were well above national averages. All pupils presented for Advanced Higher achieved an A-C award.

Mathematics

The overall quality of teaching was good. Learners' experiences were very good. Arrangements for meeting learners' needs were very good and very high standards of performance had been maintained.

Teachers established a very positive learning environment in classes. They explained ideas clearly, and made effective use of ICT. Teachers used questioning well to check pupils' knowledge. They valued pupils' responses and built on them throughout lessons. The majority of staff used investigative approaches to teaching which developed a deeper understanding of key concepts. Almost all pupils were very motivated and attentive in class and worked very hard on tasks set. They worked very well together on group work tasks. All teachers ensured that tasks were appropriate, and supported pupils very well in their learning, both in class and in additional study sessions. The range of courses available for pupils enabled them to build on their successes, and to make appropriate progress from year to year. Most staff encouraged pupils to reflect on their progress, and comment on their classroom experiences. Several senior pupils supported younger pupils in class. An Easter study trip developed pupils' skills in studying mathematics and promoted the importance of successfully combining work and exercise.

By the end of S2, most pupils were attaining or exceeding national levels. These proportions were increasing. Almost all pupils made significant progress from their previous levels of attainment by the end of S2. At S4, attainment in mathematics was consistently above or well above national averages, and was improving. Almost all pupils attained a Standard Grade award at Grades 1 to 6, or an award at Access 3. By the end of S6, attainment was above or well above national averages at Intermediate and Higher. Almost all pupils who studied Advanced Higher attained an award at grades A-C.

Chemistry and S1/S2 science

The overall quality of teaching and learners' experiences was very good. Arrangements for meeting learners' needs were good. Improvements in pupils' performance were very good.

Teachers planned and organised lessons very well and created a stimulating learning environment. They shared the purposes of lessons well with pupils, and evaluated and summarised learning at the conclusion, to ensure that pupils were active in their own learning. Teachers' questioning was used effectively to assess pupils' understanding and built on pupils' answers. Teachers knew their pupils well and provided good support for their learning. The pace of learning was not appropriate for all pupils. The range of Intermediate 1 Units offered to some S3/S4 pupils gave an experience of science, but offered limited progression to S5. In all lessons, pupils were well motivated and engaged in tasks. They worked successfully on collaborative and individual tasks. Their achievements were enhanced and their interest stimulated through a range of activities such as visiting speakers, study trips and entry into competitions. The department had sought pupils' views on their learning experience. Staff had started to make pupils more active in their learning through analysing their performance to identify specific strengths and areas for development.

At S1/S2, most pupils were making good progress in their coursework. At S3/S4, the number of presentations was well above the national average in 2007. The proportions of

pupils attaining a Credit award was consistently well above the national average. At S5/S6, the proportions of pupils attaining grade A were consistently well above the national average. All of the increasing number of Advanced Higher candidates had attained A-C grades.

Technical education

The overall quality of teaching was very good. The quality of learners' experiences and arrangements for meeting learning needs were good. Very high standards of performance had been maintained.

Teachers created a positive, purposeful climate in classes which engaged pupils well in their learning activities. Teachers provided clear, helpful explanations and skilful demonstrations. Pupils were motivated, hardworking, enthusiastic and very well behaved. Learning proceeded at a good pace in all lessons. Support staff were conscientious and effective in helping to meet pupils' needs. Teachers had begun work on improving the S1/S2 course. In these classes tasks did not currently take enough account of pupils' prior attainment. They did not give pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their own thinking and to make choices or informed decisions. Staff in the department were supporting a group of S6 pupils who were, on their own initiative and in their own time, building a traditional, wooden boat. This was developing pupils' skills in teamworking and independent learning.

At S1/S2 almost all pupils showed good skills in craftwork, design and graphics and were making good progress with their course work. At S3/S4, pupils performed notably better in Standard Grade graphic communication than in their other subjects. Performance in graphic communication, and in Standard Grade craft and design, was consistently well above the national average. At S5/S6, pupils performed notably better in Higher graphic communication than in their other subjects, with all pupils attaining A-C grades. Performance in Higher product design had improved, with all pupils now attaining A-C grades. The small number of pupils presented for Advanced Higher graphic communication attained an A grade.

Achievement in national assessments, examinations and other areas

Information about the subjects inspected has been given earlier in the report. Across the school, particular features of pupils' progress, results in examinations and other qualifications, including those awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)³ for the three year period 2005-2007, are included below.

Particular features of achievement in national assessments and other areas by the end of S2 included the following.

³ 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

- By the end of S2, pupils were making very good progress and attaining very well across the curriculum. Almost all had built very well on their earlier learning and had improved on their previous levels of attainment. Most pupils were attaining appropriate levels in mathematics, reading and writing. An increasing proportion was achieving those levels earlier than would normally be expected, most notably in reading.

Particular features of achievement in examinations and other areas by the end of S4 included the following.

- By the end of S4, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more awards at SCQF level 3 or better was in line with the national average but was lower than in schools with similar characteristics. Performance at SCQF levels 4 and 5 was well above national averages, and in line with schools with similar characteristics.
- Pupils performed notably better in Standard Grade administration and graphic communication than in their other subjects.
- Attainment across subjects was consistently high. The majority of subjects performed well above national averages, and no subject performed below the national average.

Particular features of achievement in examinations and other areas by the end of S6 included the following.

- By the end of S6, the proportions of pupils attaining one, three and five or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better had been consistently improving. The school was performing better than schools with similar characteristics on these measures.
- The proportion of pupils attaining one or more award at SCQF level 7 was consistently well above the national average and higher than in schools with similar characteristics.
- The proportion of pupils attaining A-C grades at Intermediate 2 level was well above national averages in art and design, biology, business management, hospitality (practical cookery) and physical education
- The proportions of pupils attaining A-C grades at Higher Grade were well above national averages in accounting, administration, art and design, French, geography, German, history and music
- Attainment across subjects was consistently very high. Most subjects performed above or well above national averages.

Overall the school was very successful in raising pupils' achievement. Staff provided appropriate courses and effective teaching that enabled pupils to build on previous learning and attainments. This resulted in improving examination performance at nearly all levels which, in almost all areas, was better than in schools with similar characteristics. Nearly all pupils were confident and successful learners. They participated actively in the extensive range of out of class opportunities and contributed effectively to the school and the wider community.

4. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>The school had good arrangements to ensure the care, welfare and development of pupils. All staff were sensitive to pupils' needs, and to any difficulties they might have. Staff understood and operated effective policies for child protection and anti-bullying. Almost all pupils had a trusted adult who would resolve any problems confidentially and sensitively. The PSE programme gave thorough attention to education about health and wellbeing, good mental health, and study skills. Pastoral care staff had developed effective support for education about drugs and dealing with bereavement. At S5/S6 the programme used outside presenters well for a range of activities, including education on personal finance. Education about diet and nutrition received insufficient emphasis at S5/S6. Arrangements to support pupils during transition from primary to S1 were well-planned. S1 pupils valued the support they received from their senior "buddies". At S2 and S4, pupils received high quality support when choosing courses and preparing for future careers. A high proportion of pupils used the school canteen, which offered them a range of healthy choices. The tuck shop did not provide an appropriate range of healthy options. Pastoral care staff did not always inform staff in advance of pupils who were potentially vulnerable, such as those with difficult family circumstances. Their record-keeping was not rigorous enough. Education about online safety was not consistently provided during PSE.</p>

Aspect	Comment
<p>Management and use of resources and space for learning</p>	<p>Strengths in the management and use of resources and space for learning just outweighed weaknesses in accommodation. Positive features included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the outstanding quality of accommodation in the most recent extension to the building; • attractive displays of pupils' work and achievements throughout the school; • the high level of provision of ICT for teaching and learning; and • extensive school grounds, and a nearby sports centre, which were well used for sports and games. <p>Older parts of the building were cramped for space, and some classrooms suffered from water penetration. They did not provide a positive learning environment for pupils. People with restricted mobility had difficulty moving around the school, and using the equipment in the technical department. Aspects of school security required to be reviewed.</p>
<p>Equalities, expectations and engagement</p>	<p>All staff made very effective contributions to the life and work of the school and clearly recognised their responsibilities for the personal development and welfare for pupils. They willingly gave time to support pupils in a wide range of trips and visits, and for study support. The school's approaches to setting expectations and celebrating achievements were excellent. There was a well-established culture of achievement for all, including vulnerable pupils and those with additional support needs. Almost all staff and pupils understood and shared that culture. The school effectively celebrated the individual and team success of current and former pupils at assemblies, and at awards ceremonies. The school's approaches to ensuring equality and fairness were very good. Pupils' views and comments were valued by staff. The school's strong links with a school in Malawi, and other exchanges and visits, were successful in making pupils and staff aware of the issues facing people in other countries. The work of the English and RME departments, the Eco-Schools Project, and the developing <i>Arctic Voice</i> project, placed a strong and appropriate emphasis on issues of sustainability. The school's behaviour management system was very well implemented, though a few pupils had a perception that it was unfair. There were insufficient opportunities for religious observance.</p>

Aspect	Comment
The school's success in involving parents	The school's approaches to involving parents were very good. Parents found the school welcoming. Staff kept them very well informed of their children's progress, particularly where there were emerging concerns. Regular newsletters were attractive and informative. These were also available through the school website, which contained other useful information. The Parent Council was active in supporting the school. Senior managers regularly sought parents' views on how the school was performing. The local community supported the school very well, for example by offering work experience placements and preparing pupils for interviews.

5. Leading and improving the school

Fortrose Academy was a very successful school. Under the leadership of the committed and inspirational headteacher, the school had established an outstandingly positive climate in which all pupils were expected to achieve very highly. All staff and pupils were very well involved in the life of the school. Their views were valued, and they were encouraged to develop their own ideas and accept responsibility. This shared ethos led to a very high and consistent quality of teaching for effective learning across the school. In some cases, teachers' practice was outstanding. Almost all pupils responded by being well behaved and keen to learn and achieve. The quality of their learning, and of their attainment and achievement, was very high. The school was very well placed to continue to perform very highly and improve further.

The leadership of the headteacher was very good. He had a clear vision for the school which he effectively shared with all members of the school community. His work to promote and encourage very high expectations for staff, pupils and parents was outstanding. This had led to the school's high reputation in the community, and very high standards of learning and attainment. He had also ensured that staff and pupils worked together and enjoyed being part of the school. He led by example through his own innovative teaching approaches. Members of the senior management team were open and approachable. They were very effective in their key role of establishing a very positive climate for learning in the school. They had effectively supported less successful departments in improving attainment and the quality of pupils' learning. Some aspects of their links with departments were not sufficiently rigorous. Weaknesses in aspects of the work of the pastoral care team had not been identified. Principal teachers were very effective in ensuring high standards of attainment and high quality learning experiences across their departments. Some showed outstanding leadership for learning. The school had not yet developed a wider whole-school role for principal teachers with responsibility for faculties. The work of the principal teachers of guidance did not take account of the most recent national standards for best practice.

The school's approaches to improvement through self evaluation were good, and had led to a high degree of quality and consistency in its work. The school's commitment to obtaining

the views of staff, pupils and parents to help it reflect on its performance was notable. In particular, staff sought the views of pupils on the quality of teaching and learning. Senior managers used the evidence from self-evaluation, and from examination results, to support departments and individual teachers. This evidence included the results of lesson observations by senior managers and principal teachers. The school was now moving to involve all staff in lesson observation and to share good practice more effectively. Senior managers had not observed teaching and learning in PSE, and had not identified weaknesses there. The school had very good approaches to developing leadership capacity in staff as a whole. Staff shared the vision and values of the school. They were encouraged to bring forward ideas, such as for the teaching and learning group, to lead developments, and to represent the school. The work of all staff was clearly and openly valued. Overall, non-teaching staff had fewer opportunities for professional development.

As well as building on the strengths and addressing the issues raised throughout this report, the school and the education authority should address the following main points for action.

Main points for action

Continue to improve achievement by:

- improving the curriculum through continuing to widen vocational options for pupils, and addressing weaknesses in the provision of physical education and religious and moral education;
- further strengthening the rigour of links between senior managers and departments, particularly with the pastoral care team;
- increasing the frequency of religious observance; and
- addressing the issues of security and accessibility identified in this report.

What happens next?

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will continue to improve the high quality of education provided by the school, and to share that plan with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents and carers. In addition, the education authority will provide a report to the District Inspector on the improvements that have been made to school security and accessibility for persons with mobility difficulties.

Brian Stewart
HM Inspector

17 June 2008

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The following quality indicators have been used in the inspection process to contribute to the evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school in raising achievement for all pupils.

Section 3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?	
The curriculum	good
Teaching for effective learning	very good
Meeting learning needs	very good
Learners' experiences	very good
Improvements in performance: S1/S2	very good
Improvements in performance: S3/S4	very good
Improvements in performance: S5/S6	excellent

Section 4. How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	adequate
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	excellent
Equality and fairness	very good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	very good

Section 5. Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	very good
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	very good
Leadership of improvement and change (across the school)	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear the judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

The following provides a summary of questionnaire responses. Key issues from the questionnaires have been considered in the inspection and comments are included as appropriate throughout the report.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment, and the school had a good reputation in the community. • The school dealt with any concerns raised by parents. • The school was well led. 	<p>Around a fifth of parents wanted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more help in supporting their children with homework; and • a clearer idea of the school's priorities for improvement.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers expected them to work to the best of their ability, and helped them when they had difficulties. • The school helped them to stay safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fifth of pupils felt that pupils were not treated fairly in the school.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over half of non-teaching staff wanted their staff development time to be used more effectively.

Appendix 3 Performance in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications

This data is used alongside evaluations of teaching for effective learning, meeting learning needs, expectations and promoting achievement, and the overall quality of learners' achievement, to inform the overall evaluation of improvements in performance.

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

Percentage of relevant S4 roll gaining awards by end of S4

		2005	2006	2007
English and Mathematics @ Level 3	Fortrose Academy	96	92	92
	Comparator schools⁴	96	96	97
	National	90	91	92
5+ @ Level 3 or better	Fortrose Academy	95	95	91
	Comparator schools	96	97	96
	National	90	91	91
5+ @ Level 4 or better	Fortrose Academy	91	89	88
	Comparator schools	90	90	89
	National	76	77	76
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Fortrose Academy	56	49	47
	Comparator schools	52	50	49
	National	34	35	33

Percentage of relevant S4 roll gaining awards by end of S5

		2005	2006	2007
5+ @ Level 4 or better	Fortrose Academy	93	91	92
	Comparator schools⁴	92	91	91
	National	78	78	79
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Fortrose Academy	65	66	65
	Comparator schools	64	63	63
	National	45	45	46
1+ @ Level 6 or better	Fortrose Academy	58	62	58
	Comparator schools	56	56	51
	National	39	38	39
3+ @ Level 6 or better	Fortrose Academy	41	44	39
	Comparator schools	37	35	35
	National	23	22	22
5+ @ Level 6 or better	Fortrose Academy	28	23	22
	Comparator schools	18	16	15
	National	10	10	10

Percentage of relevant S4 roll gaining awards by end of S6

		2005	2006	2007
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Fortrose Academy	64	66	71
	Comparator schools⁴	65	67	66
	National	47	48	47
1+ @ Level 6 or better	Fortrose Academy	62	61	68
	Comparator schools	61	61	60
	National	43	43	42
3+ @ Level 6 or better	Fortrose Academy	46	50	56
	Comparator schools	47	45	44
	National	30	30	29
5+ @ Level 6 or better	Fortrose Academy	36	41	46
	Comparator schools	32	33	32
	National	19	20	19
1+ @ Level 7 or better	Fortrose Academy	25	23	25
	Comparator schools	22	22	21
	National	12	13	12

⁴ Comparator schools are the 20 schools statistically closest to the school being inspected in terms of the five socio-economic characteristics of the school population and surrounding areas.

Appendix 4 Good practice

In the course of the inspection, the following aspects of innovative and effective practice were evaluated as being worthy of wider dissemination.

The Unicycling project at Fortrose Academy

Within a climate of high expectations of achievement for all, the headteacher had recognised that not all pupils could attain a high degree of academic success, and that many faced significant barriers to learning. In this context, he introduced the unicycling challenge to the school. This activity differed from anything else ever tried by people in the school, and so no one had any prior learning or experience to support them. As part of his commitment to set himself challenges and lead by example, the headteacher undertook to learn to unicycle himself.

The project was very successful. Around a hundred pupils became competent unicyclists, and many developed a high degree of skill. Included in this group were pupils who had experienced only a limited degree of success in other school activities. Success in unicycling significantly developed their self-esteem. The headteacher himself was successful.

The headteacher was able to use the key message of the project both with the unicyclists and with other learners across the school. He could demonstrate that success may often seem unlikely or impossible, but that perseverance is required. As one pupil commented: *“When you fall off, you get back on and try again. That’s how you learn.”* This work supported the very high expectations for achievement in the school.

Using the global dimension as a context for learning in English at Fortrose Academy

The use of global issues as a context for developing language skills was embedded in English courses at all stages. Literary texts set in other countries or with a global focus were built into courses, and promoted as texts for personal study. Learning activities included:

- research on other countries for the S1 Library Skills unit;
- an S2 media unit, *Life in Africa*, on the impact of the media on perceptions of Africa using newspaper stories, advertisements for charities, photographs and maps, from which pupils produced a report or presentation for assembly;
- a unit on child labour for Standard Grade and Intermediate courses;
- *The Silent Genocide* for Intermediate 1 & 2 which used the school's Malawi link to explore the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and
- resources on the impact of the chocolate trade in West Africa for Higher.

Learning approaches required collaboration and helped pupils develop skills in writing and talking for different purposes. In addition, they developed enterprise skills through fundraising and awareness-raising, for example, writing to newspapers and politicians. Pupils found these real tasks and audiences very motivating.

The S5 Communications course catered for pupils with General or Foundation awards at Standard Grade, who did not wish to follow Intermediate courses. It was designed to build on their existing understanding of global issues. The course aimed to develop practical communication skills, the use of ICT and the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence. The starting point was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Pupils discussed concepts of rights and responsibilities, and studied the history of UNICEF. They studied aspects of child labour and exploitation, in manufacturing and trafficking, and as child soldiers. They produced well-structured reports, persuasive letters and job applications and engaged in thoughtful and highly motivating group discussions. The class worked as a team in choosing, advertising and running a fund-raising activity for a child-centred charity, which developed problem-solving and leadership skills and enterprising attitudes, and provided opportunities for practical communication. They learned to run committee meetings and engage in risk assessment and critical thinking. The course developed their confidence and experience, encouraged them to contribute effectively, and helped them along the route to becoming responsible citizens.

Developing leadership and teamwork through the Level 1 Sports Leadership (SL) Award at Fortrose Academy

Fortrose Academy had placed considerable emphasis on the development of leadership and teamwork. The use of the SL award with the majority of S4 pupils through their core PE programme had proved to be an extremely effective way of supporting this development. Two periods of core PE were timetabled for all pupils in S4. Pupils could choose to spend one of those periods working towards the SL award. The pupils valued the experience and around 60% chose to participate each year. The programme combined theory and practice, with pupils working cooperatively to plan and carry out a range of activities. They provided one another with helpful feedback and generally gained increased insight into effective learning and teaching.

The course provided the pupils with opportunities to put their learning into practice. P6 and P7 pupils from one of Fortrose's associated schools came to the secondary school for physical education lessons which were planned and delivered by the S4 SL group. The pupils, under the supervision of their teacher, took full responsibility for the lesson. They explained the learning intentions to the primary pupils, led and supervised the warm up, and delivered the planned activity.

The scheme at Fortrose had developed a partnership with Coaching Highland. A professional sports coach visited the school regularly to provide the budding coaches with advice and to assess their progress towards the award. Pupils in S5/S6 who had opted to study performance units in PE were also provided with the opportunity to participate in the scheme. Pupils and staff were extremely positive about the programme and the benefits that it brought to all concerned.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

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