

**Ayr Academy  
South Ayrshire Council**

**24 June 2003**

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# **Inspection of Standards and Quality in Ayr Academy South Ayrshire Council**

## **1. Introduction**

Ayr Academy was inspected in February and March 2003 as part of a national sample of secondary education.

The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. HM Inspectors evaluated learning, teaching and attainment, examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. The subjects included in the inspection were English, mathematics, history, physics and science at S1/ S2 and technical education.

HM Inspectors also evaluated the quality of support for pupils, including arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils and child protection, and aspects of guidance and support for learning. In evaluating how well the school and departments were managed, HM Inspectors assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires which were issued to a sample of parents and pupils and to all staff. They met the chairperson of the School Board and a group of parents.

## **2. The school**

Ayr Academy is located in the centre of Ayr. It serves the areas of Annbank and Coylton to the east of the town

and Doonfoot to the south-west. Immediately before the inspection, the school had been granted New Community School status.

At the time of the inspection, the roll was 595. There were eighteen pupils with Records of Needs. Around twenty per cent of pupils were entitled to free meals, which was above the national average.

### **Parents' views**

Around a third of parents responded to the questionnaire. Those who did were very pleased with the work of the school.

Almost all felt that:

- their children enjoyed being at school and found the work stimulating and challenging;
- school reports gave them helpful information about their children's progress and parents' evenings were helpful and informative;
- staff made them welcome in the school and would respond to matters of concern they raised; and
- staff treated their children fairly and showed concern for their care and welfare.

### **Ethos**

The atmosphere in the school was good. Most pupils were friendly and welcoming to visitors. Relationships between staff and pupils were good and in some cases very good. Most pupils behaved well in classrooms and in corridors, but a small minority exhibited challenging behaviour. Pupil councils provided good opportunities for pupils to be involved in making decisions about aspects of school life. Senior pupils had a good range of opportunities to take responsibilities, for example as prefects. They raised funds for charities and helped younger pupils with their work. The school provided

regular opportunities for religious observance. Pupils' attendance was in line with national averages.

The school had a number of reward schemes which it used to promote pupils' achievements. Most staff made good use of praise to encourage pupils to do well. Teachers had appropriately high expectations for pupils' attendance and behaviour. However, expectations for what pupils could achieve in their lessons were not consistently high enough in all departments.

There was a good sense of equality and fairness in evidence throughout the school. Teachers took appropriate steps to raise pupils' awareness of equal opportunities and cultural diversity through the programmes for personal and social education (PSE) and religious and moral education. The support for learning department had successfully introduced a short course on disability awareness for S1 classes. The school should continue to ensure that it addresses and promotes issues of equality and fairness through all aspects of its work.

## **School and community**

The school had very good links with parents and the local community. Positive features included:

- very strong support from the School Board and the parent-teachers association;
- good support from local businesses for work experience placements and school events;
- well attended drama and entertainment evenings which the school produced for parents and the community;
- very good links with local primary schools which helped teachers to make effective use of information on the achievement of pupils on transfer to S1; and

- positive links with the social work department and the health board.

The school used a good range of methods for communicating with parents, including an informative handbook and regular, detailed school newsletters. Parents were well informed of their children's progress and they were given good advice on how they could support their children's learning at home.

### **Accommodation**

Overall, the quality of accommodation was fair. The building contained a number of attractive and historic features including the art department, the memorial hall and the central school hall. There was a centrally located and well-organised library. The school, with support from the education authority had made many improvements to the accommodation. Most classrooms had been redecorated and re-carpeted and parts of the building had been improved by replacing windows and re-cladding external walls. Ancillary staff kept the school very clean and well maintained. However, some important weaknesses in the accommodation remained. In the school playground there was a lack of social areas for pupils and vehicles and pedestrians were not appropriately separated. Through its review of accommodation, the school had identified areas which required to be improved. There was insufficient space in the music department. Craft rooms in the technical education department and laboratories in science needed to be upgraded.

### **Staffing and resources**

The school was very well staffed with a good balance of experienced and more recently qualified teachers. The recently appointed librarian had made good arrangements for pupils and teachers to use the library on a regular basis. There was a good number of teachers and auxiliaries to support pupils with special educational needs. Administrative and ancillary staff, technicians, and classroom assistants made very good contributions to the work of the school.

The school had very good resources for learning and teaching. All departments had sufficient, good quality teaching materials. There was very good provision of information and communications technology (ICT). The headteacher, with very good support from the administrative finance officer, operated a very efficient, open and fair system for managing the school budget.

### **3. How well are pupils performing?**

#### **Overall quality of attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was fair. Most pupils were making good progress in their coursework, although the pace of learning was often too slow. The school had initiated a number of approaches to raise attainment. Some of these were beginning to prove effective. At S1/S2, there had been improvements in attainment in writing and mathematics. At S3 to S6 the school had put in place effective procedures to track pupils' progress and attainments.

Pupils' achievements in national examinations were below national averages. However, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more Highers was in line with schools with similar characteristics.

#### **Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Awards**

The following comments are based on SQA data for three years from 2000 to 2002.

- By the end of S4 the proportion of pupils achieving five or more Credit awards at Standard Grade was below the national average. The results showed an improving trend.
- By the end of S5, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A-C grades at Higher was below the national average.

- The majority of pupils presented for Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS) or Advanced Higher achieved A-C grades.

Information on the subjects inspected is given later in this report. Features of attainment in the subjects not inspected were as follows.

- At Standard Grade, pupils' performance was poorer in French than in their other subjects.
- At Higher, the proportion of pupils who achieved no award in biology, business management and chemistry was well above the national average.
- At Intermediate 2, all of the small number presented for art and design achieved A and B grades.

#### **4. How well are the inspected departments performing?**

##### **English**

##### **Attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was good at S1/S2 and S3/S4. It was fair at S5/S6. Pupils were making variable progress in their coursework. The department was making progress in raising attainment in writing at S1/S2. At this stage, the majority of pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in talking, reading and writing. At Standard Grade, the proportion of pupils achieving a Credit award had improved to around the national average in 2002. In 2000 and 2002, pupils performed better at Standard Grade than in their other subjects. At Higher Grade, the proportion of pupils gaining an A-C award was below national averages and had deteriorated since 2000. The proportion of pupils gaining an A-C award at Intermediate levels 1 and 2 was above national averages. At Intermediate 2, in S5, pupils' performance was better than would have been expected from their Standard Grade results. In 2001 and 2002, the

majority of pupils presented for Advanced Higher had been successful.

### **Courses**

Courses at all stages were good. The principal teacher needed to ensure that guidance to staff and the monitoring of teachers' plans were rigorous enough to ensure appropriate balance and progression in the S1/S2 and S3/S4 courses. Although the courses leading to National Qualifications at S5/S6 took account of national guidance, departmental documentation required fuller development.

### **Learning and teaching**

There were positive features to learning and teaching. Teachers provided a good balance of whole class, group and individual activity. When used, direct teaching was effective and conveyed to pupils a sense of purpose for learning. Generally teachers planned their lessons well, but in S1/S2 pupils needed to be challenged more to justify their ideas. The pace of some lessons was not high enough and sometimes pupils did not have enough opportunity to think independently and to play an active role in learning. There was a need for more consistent practice by teachers in reviewing how well pupils achieved objectives within individual lessons. Pupils applied themselves in a positive learning environment, although levels of motivation varied in some lower sets. Levels of support for pupils were generally good, with some very good practice at S3/S4. Teachers needed to be more consistent in identifying next steps in learning for individual pupils.

### **Management and quality assurance**

The committed principal teacher led the department well. She had gained the confidence of staff, took their views into account and had been successful in generating a team spirit. She had managed change well against a background of staffing instability. She had identified clear priorities for development and fully involved staff in formulating departmental policy and planning for improvement. She had developed a rigorous approach to self-evaluation. She now needed to review staff

deployment regularly and, with the support of senior managers, develop further opportunities to monitor learning and teaching.

**Priorities for action** The department should improve aspects of learning and teaching, particularly at S1/S2. The department should raise levels of attainment, particularly in Higher. With the support of senior managers, the principal teacher should develop further opportunities to monitor learning and teaching and ensure the best deployment of staff.

## **Mathematics**

### **Attainment**

Overall, attainment was good at S1/S2 and S5/S6, and fair at S3/S4. Performance was improving at all stages, but standards in coursework and examinations at S3/S4 were still too variable. By the end of S2, the majority of pupils reached national levels of attainment. At Standard Grade, the proportion of Credit awards had been well below the national average, but in 2002 was in line with the national average. At Higher Grade and Intermediate 2, the proportion of A-C grades rose to above the national average in 2002. The majority of pupils who had been presented for Advanced Higher achieved an A-C grade.

### **Courses**

Courses at all stages were good. Access courses were being developed in S3/S4 to meet the needs of a wider range of pupils. The department recognised the need to review the S1/S2 course as new textbooks were introduced. It planned to develop guidance on learning and teaching approaches further.

### **Learning and teaching**

Learning and teaching had a number of strengths. Teachers generally gave clear explanations, set regular homework and used questions effectively. Most teachers also had high expectations of the quality and presentation of pupils' work. There were some very good lessons with pupils responding enthusiastically to well planned opportunities for them to collaborate in solving

challenging problems. However, in some classes, tasks were repetitive and not sufficiently stimulating. Not all teachers made enough use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning. Most pupils worked conscientiously but in S4 particularly, some pupils made very little effort. Very good individual support from teachers, co-operative teaching and setting arrangements helped to meet pupils' needs. Assessment arrangements were good from S3 to S6. In S1/S2, assessment and recording needed further development to provide better evidence of pupils' progress and attainment in different aspects of mathematics.

**Management and quality assurance**

The principal teacher managed the department very well. He had developed the curriculum, improved resources and introduced structures to improve consistency of practice across the department. The staff were committed and hard working, but needed to work more closely together to share ideas. The department had undertaken evaluations of aspects of its work and as a result had identified clear priorities within the development plan. Staff generally made good progress in implementing their plans.

**Priorities for action**

With a view to raising attainment, teachers should work closely together to share good practice and further improve consistency across classes. The department should review courses and assessment in S1/S2 and should develop course advice at all levels to include the effective use of ICT.

**History**

**Attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was fair at all stages. Attainment in course work was variable at S1/S2. Higher attaining pupils coped well with tasks but needed more challenging work. Course assessments at S1/S2 were too difficult for some pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils at S3/S4 required to have more confidence with enquiry skills. The percentage of S4 pupils gaining Credit awards

at Standard Grade was below the national average. The numbers of pupils presented for National Qualification (NQ) courses at Intermediate 1 and 2 levels were small, but most pupils passed with an A award. At Higher, the percentage of pupils in S5/S6 who gained A-C awards was variable and overall was below the national average.

### **Courses**

The S1/S2 course was good, with relevant topics and appropriate attention to Scottish history. Courses at Standard Grade and Higher were uneven in quality. Both required more variety of pupil experiences. The pace of some aspects of the Higher course needed to be increased. The department was taking steps to meet a wider range of pupil needs by developing NQ courses at both Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 levels.

### **Learning and teaching**

The quality of learning and teaching varied across the department. Some lessons involved good interaction with pupils. Others lacked enough pace and stimulation. A wider range of teaching approaches and resources needed to be built in to courses. Pupils at all stages required to be more independent in their learning and to have increased experience of discussion and debate. More challenge should be provided for higher attaining pupils at S1/S2 and to address the needs of those experiencing difficulties in their learning. Assessment was well organised, with suitable steps taken to ensure its quality. There was good analysis of pupils' performance in some aspects of Standard Grade and Higher courses, but this had not yet been applied fully across the department.

### **Management and quality assurance**

Leadership of the department was fair. Departmental meetings were used conscientiously to monitor progress with courses. A useful departmental handbook was being developed. The departmental development plan identified necessary priorities for future development, although clearer and more specific targets were needed to make it manageable. The principal teacher now needed to

focus on building a greater variety of learning experiences for pupils within the department and on improving standards of attainment.

**Priorities for action** From S1 to S4, the department should increase the range of teaching approaches and the variety and challenge in pupil tasks. Additional steps should be taken to meet the needs of pupils experiencing learning difficulties at S1/S2. The pace of the Higher course should be increased and steps taken to engage pupils more actively in analysis, debate and discussion.

## **Physics and S1/S2 science**

**Attainment** The overall quality of attainment was fair in science at S1/S2. In physics, it was fair at S3/S4 and good at S5/S6. In science, the majority of pupils demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of recent coursework. They were developing good skills in planning and carrying out investigations, but generally needed to improve standards in reporting. In physics, the majority of pupils at S3/S4 and most at S5/S6 coped well with their coursework. At Standard Grade, the proportion of pupils achieving Credit awards was well below national averages in 2000 and 2002. In 2001, when presentations were much lower, Credit awards were well above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining Higher A-C grades was close to the national average.

**Courses** The S1/S2 science course was good. Following collaborative work with teachers in local primary schools, the department had adjusted the S1/S2 course to take more account of pupils' prior experience. Physics courses were good. The department provided high quality materials for all courses.

**Learning and teaching** In both science and physics, there were examples of very effective direct teaching. In a few classes, teachers did not control questioning well or make the most effective

use of resources to develop pupils' understanding of scientific ideas. In physics, the principal teacher made good use of ICT to enhance learning and teaching in the Higher class. He should now support his colleagues in developing this good practice in other physics and science courses. Most pupils in science and physics worked conscientiously. In some classes, however, too many were not actively engaged in their learning. At all stages, teachers set regular homework. The department had made good progress in developing assessment in S1/S2 science. Assessment in physics was well organised. The department needed to make more rigorous use of assessment information to track pupils' progress and identify ways of supporting their learning.

**Management and quality assurance**

The principal teacher of physics provided good leadership. He demonstrated a clear commitment to improving the quality of physics courses and provided good support for his less experienced colleague. He needed to further strengthen the department's approaches to self-evaluation.

The principal teacher of chemistry had the main responsibility for the management of S1/S2 science, a role which he fulfilled very well. He had given a very good lead in identifying and taking forward key priorities for development. However, science staff did not always work well as a team in contributing to development tasks or implementing consistently agreed procedures. Opportunities for the science department to discuss and evaluate their work and share good practice were too infrequent.

**Priorities for action**

The principal teacher of physics should further develop approaches to self-evaluation, including more rigorous analysis of attainment, with a view to raising attainment.

The principal teachers of physics, biology and chemistry should give stronger corporate leadership in science by

agreeing on development priorities, delegating tasks and establishing more consistent approaches to monitoring and evaluating the department's work.

## **Technical education**

### **Attainment**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment was fair at all stages. There was some evidence of improvement in the standards pupils were achieving. Most pupils were developing useful skills and knowledge in coursework in craft and design, graphic communication and woodworking skills. In Standard Grade craft and design, the proportion of pupils gaining Credit awards was similar to the national average. In graphic communication none had achieved a Credit award. When compared with their other subjects, pupils' performance at Standard Grade had sometimes been weak. Too many pupils received no awards. Very small numbers were presented for Higher and Intermediate courses.

### **Courses**

Staff had begun to introduce improvements to the course at S1/S2. In time this would provide pupils with a good, broad experience in craft, graphics including computer aided drafting (CAD), and aspects of electronics, pneumatics and structures. Design and problem solving skills were not given enough emphasis. At S3/S4, courses in craft and design, graphic communication and practical craft skills were good. In S5/S6, the department offered a good programme in practical craft skills and craft and design.

### **Learning and teaching**

Teachers provided pupils with clear explanations and helpful demonstrations. They made effective use of the skilful technician to support learning and teaching in practical activities. They made some use of appropriate homework tasks. The pace of learning was generally too slow. Most pupils showed interest in their tasks, although

these were often undemanding. Teachers did not involve pupils enough in assessment, or provide them with sufficiently detailed feedback on their progress.

**Management and quality assurance**

The principal teacher had provided strong leadership in his eighteen months in post. He had led staff well in introducing improvements to the curriculum at S1 to S6. He had developed successful teamwork and had made increasingly good use of a range of approaches to monitor and improve the departments' performance. Staff needed further guidance and support to improve the overall quality of learning and teaching.

**Priorities for action**

The department should continue to take steps to improve the quality of courses, learning and teaching and pupils' attainments at all stages.

## **5. How good is the curriculum?**

The school offered pupils a good curriculum at all stages.

At S1/S2, pupils followed a good range and balance of subjects. Some subjects set pupils by ability with a view to raising attainment. The school used subject rotations in social subjects to reduce the number of teachers with whom pupils had contact each week. There was no discrete programme for ICT at S1. The school should continue with its plans to audit how effectively ICT is integrated across the curriculum.

At S3/S4, most pupils followed a programme of eight Standard Grade subjects and school-based programmes in physical education, religious and moral education, and personal and social development. To meet the needs of a small number of pupils more effectively, the school, working in partnership with other agencies, provided a course in enterprise and life skills. For the same reason,

the school had also introduced NQ courses at Access and Intermediate levels in mathematics and practical craft skills and had plans to extend this to other subjects.

Courses in S5/S6 allowed pupils to progress well from S4. Pupils were able to choose from a good range of NQ courses at Access, Intermediate and Higher levels. In addition, a number of subjects offered courses at Advanced Higher level.

## **6. How good is learning and teaching?**

The quality of teaching was good overall. Most teachers gave effective explanations and questioned pupils well. In the best lessons, teachers used a good range of approaches and activities to interest pupils and sustain their motivation. Appropriate homework tasks complemented classwork.

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was fair. While the majority of pupils worked well without close supervision, some needed to be more actively involved in learning and to take a more conscientious approach to their work. The pace of learning in some classes was slow. Senior managers had identified the need to improve pupils' learning as a priority for raising attainment.

Teachers met pupils' needs well. Generally, tasks and activities were well matched to the needs of individual pupils. However, in some classes, tasks did not provide pupils with sufficient challenge. In most lessons, teachers used a range of appropriate resources and selected approaches to help pupils achieve the next steps in their learning. In some subjects, pupils contributed to setting their own learning targets.

At all stages, most teachers used an appropriate range of approaches to assess pupils' progress in their learning. The quality of feedback to pupils on their progress was good, with some very good examples.

The school had very good procedures for reporting to parents, including identifying steps in learning. Parents were encouraged to respond to school reports.

## **7. How well are pupils supported?**

### **Care and welfare**

The school had very good arrangements for the care and welfare of its pupils. Sound procedures were in place for managing child protection issues and for dealing with instances where pupils' health might be at risk. The school should ensure that staff have access to regular in-service on child protection issues. The school dealt effectively with issues of bullying. Pupils felt safe in the school and felt able to communicate concerns to staff. The school's programme for health education included appropriate aspects of substance misuse and responsible relationships. Parents had yet to be consulted about the contents of the programme. The school provided a very good number of extra-curricular activities which made a positive contribution to the development of pupils' personal and social skills.

### **Guidance**

Positive features of guidance and pastoral care included:

- the hard work and commitment of the guidance staff and the very good knowledge they had of their pupils;
- the calendar of regular interviews with pupils at all stages and the positive and regular contact with parents;
- the quality of curricular and vocational support and guidance; and

- the effective support for pupils making the transition from primary school and at other key stages.

The quality of curricular and vocational guidance was very good. Pupils received support and advice about course choice at S2, S4 and S5. Careers inserts in the full PSE programme were complemented by attendance at careers events, and open day interviews from the careers officer. All pupils in S4 were given the opportunity to participate in a work experience programme.

There was a good programme for PSE which covered a wide range of relevant topics. Issues of health education and relationships were given appropriate attention. The guidance team had plans to audit all aspects of guidance provision including aspects of the PSE programme. Guidance staff did not yet report to parents on pupils' progress in PSE.

Promoted guidance teachers fulfilled their remits very well and made a significant contribution to monitoring the progress of individual pupils. The depute headteacher managed the guidance team well. He gave the team strong support in identifying the way forward for guidance in the school. The weekly guidance meeting and in-service days were well used to reflect on policies and practice. The departmental development plan contained generally appropriate targets for improvement. Some targets required to be stated more specifically and the plan needed to link more closely to the whole school plan.

## **Support for learning**

The school had good arrangements to support pupils' learning. Pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties were taught in small groups, or individually in one of the school's three support bases. Other pupils were supported in their subject classes. Positive features of support for learning included the following.

- The good arrangements to support pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties including those with autism, behavioural difficulties, hearing impairment and visual impairment.
- The positive links with parents and primary schools, which helped with the early identification of pupils' individual needs.
- The good support the school received from a number of external agencies.

The department had made a good start in developing individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for pupils with Records of Needs and learning difficulties. These provided a useful framework for planning for individual pupils. In some cases, the learning and behavioural targets which had been identified were not specific enough to allow pupils' progress to be carefully monitored.

Support for learning teachers worked well with some subject departments. They taught co-operatively with their colleagues to support pupils in mainstream classes and gave advice on how best to meet individual pupils' needs. The principal teacher recognised that there was still a need to clarify and develop the respective roles of staff in co-operative teaching.

The department was well led by the acting principal teacher. In post for less than a year, she had worked well to build a committed team of hard-working staff. Members of the department were regularly involved in evaluating aspects of their work including the progress of individual pupils and the effectiveness of teachers' deployment. While the department development plan generally contained appropriate targets for improvement, there were too many targets and they were not stated clearly enough.

There were good arrangements for implementing legislation relating to special educational needs. The school reviewed the progress of each pupil with a Record of Needs on an annual basis. Good arrangements were in place to update the Records of Needs and to plan for future needs. Parents were very well involved in their children's review meetings. The education authority should ensure that the school receives all current parts of the Records of Needs.

**Priorities for action** The guidance team and learning support department should ensure that their development plans are well linked to the school plan and state clear targets for improvement. The learning support department should ensure that IEPs contain targets which are specific enough to allow pupils' progress to be monitored.

## **8. How well is the school managed?**

### **Overall management and leadership**

The headteacher led the school well. He was highly committed to the school and had established very good links with parents and with the local community. In his five years in post, he had initiated a number of important changes with the aim of raising attainment. He had improved approaches to development planning and put in place a good range of quality assurance procedures including monitoring pupils' progress. He had very efficiently used the school budget to improve the environment for learning in most areas of the school. The headteacher now needed to use his good knowledge of staff to promote a greater sense of teamwork and ensure that staff at all levels feel appropriately involved in decision making.

The headteacher was well supported by his senior management team who worked together effectively and carried out their individual remits well. The majority of principal teachers were making good progress in developing procedures to monitor and evaluate the work

of their departments. With the support of senior management, they should continue to focus on approaches to improving learning and teaching and raising attainment. Senior teachers carried out their remits effectively and contributed well to the work of the school.

The school had a good set of aims, linked to local objectives and national priorities. These aims had recently been reviewed with the involvement of staff, parents and pupils. The school had a range of policies which gave guidance on the work of the school. Teachers had good opportunities to participate in the working groups which had developed these policies.

### **Staff review and development**

The school was taking forward its plans to implement staff review and development based on the education authority scheme. At the time of the inspection, only the senior management team had had their work formally reviewed and remits for promoted posts were not yet fully in place. Teachers had good access to staff development opportunities which were appropriately linked to development needs. The school's arrangements for staff review and development were fair overall.

### **Planning for improvement**

The school had good approaches to development planning. The school plan was clear, well written and appropriately linked to national priorities for education. The implementation of the plan was having a positive effect on aspects of the school's work. The headteacher had provided a positive lead in establishing approaches to planning across the school. Departmental plans were broadly in line with the school plan, but were of variable quality.

### **Approaches to improving quality**

The school had good approaches to improving quality. The headteacher had introduced a range of systematic procedures, including the use of national quality indicators, to evaluate the work of the school. He had introduced twice-yearly departmental reviews and

rigorous approaches to analysing pupils' performance in SQA examinations. Members of the senior management team linked with departments to offer support and challenge. The headteacher had consulted with staff and had introduced formal observations of learning and teaching in all classrooms. He had put in place procedures to monitor pupils' progress from S3 to S6. As a result of this monitoring, the school had recently introduced a system to support a group of pupils in S4 who were not achieving their expected grades. The school had plans to extend the monitoring of pupils' progress to all stages and involve pupils in setting specific targets. Departments needed to implement more consistently the good range of quality assurance approaches which existed in the school.

## **9. How well does the school perform overall?**

Ayr Academy provided a caring and supportive environment for pupils. It gave pupils the opportunity to succeed in academic studies and also in a range of extra-curricular activities, including music and sport. The headteacher had introduced good approaches to self-evaluation, planning for improvement and monitoring pupils' progress. There was scope to improve these approaches at department level to improve pupils' learning experiences and raise their attainment.

### **Key strengths**

- The positive lead given by the headteacher in developing a range of quality assurance procedures and his commitment to improving the quality of learning and teaching.
- The strong links with the local community and associated primary schools and the effective partnerships with parents.
- The very good resources for learning and teaching and the school's management of its devolved budget.

- The quality of support for learning and guidance provision.

### **Main points for action**

In addition to addressing the priorities for action identified in this report, the school and education authority should act on the following recommendations.

- The local authority should work with the school and address the weaknesses in accommodation outlined in this report.
- The school should continue with its efforts to improve attainment.
- Teachers should improve pace and challenge in lessons and develop pupils' responsibility for their own learning.
- The school should ensure that arrangements for staff review and development are fully implemented.
- With the support of the senior management team, departments should improve their procedures for quality assurance and development planning, as indicated in this report.

HM Inspectors have asked the school and education authority to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. In liaison with the education authority, HM Inspectors will monitor progress to ensure improvements in line with the main findings of the report. They will arrange for further progress reports and visits to the school if necessary and will inform parents and carers of the outcomes of these when they occur.

Morag Gunion  
HM Inspector  
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector  
Western Division

24 June 2003

See Quality Indicator data overleaf.

# Appendix

## Indicators of quality

### **We judged the following to be *very good***

- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Curricular and vocational guidance
- Reporting pupils' progress
- Staffing
- Provision of resources
- School management of finances
- Pastoral Care

### **We judged the following to be *good***

- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Organisation and use of resources and space
- Structure of the curriculum
- Learning support
- Implementation of legislation relating to SEN and disabilities
- Leadership
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities
- Self-evaluation
- Planning for improvement
- Monitoring progress and achievement

### **We judged the following to be *fair***

- Accommodation and facilities
- Staff review and development

### **We judged the following to be *unsatisfactory***

- No aspects were found to be in this category

## **Quality of lessons observed**

HMI also evaluated the quality of the lessons observed. The overall quality of lessons was very good in 17% of cases, good in 58%, fair in 24% and unsatisfactory in 1%.

## How can you contact us?

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, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100.

Copies are also available on our web site:

[www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk)

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI at the above address. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from that office and on our website.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman directly or through your member of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government Departments and Agencies. She will not normally consider your complaint before the HMIE complaints procedure has been used. Instead, she will usually ask you to give us the chance to put matters right if we can.

Complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman must be submitted within 12 months of the date of publication of this report.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

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

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