

**Our Lady's High School
Motherwell
North Lanarkshire Council
23 January 2007**

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1. Background

Our Lady's High School was inspected in October and November 2006 as part of a national sample of secondary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the school's work at all stages. 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 also analysed pupils' attainment in national examinations (see Appendix 3), the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement. HM Inspectors focused particularly on English, mathematics, biology and S1/S2 science, and music. The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving school meals.

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 of the School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), a group of parents and members of the school chaplaincy team.

Our Lady's High School is a denominational school serving Motherwell and part of North Wishaw. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 671. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pupils' pride in their school.
- The staff's care for the pastoral welfare of pupils.
- The headteacher's and his staff's commitment to increasing achievement and sustaining strong attainment in national examinations for all pupils, for example by broadening the curriculum and out-of-hours learning opportunities.
- The impact of specialist support on pupils' learning, including the library resource centre, partner agencies, and the support team for pupils with additional support needs.
- Examples of highly effective teaching and outstanding learning.

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 effectiveness of the school in promoting the learning and personal development of all pupils in lessons and in other, broader contexts. They also considered the standards attained in specific aspects of learning.

Curriculum

The curriculum was good. Based on sound rationale and appropriate consultation, vocational aspects had been broadened very innovatively to promote achievement for pupils with a wide range of needs. Particular features of the curriculum included the following.

- At all stages the school provided a broad range of subjects. The recent addition of drama had been very successful in enhancing pupils' self-confidence. The school provided well for religious and moral education and was planning to increase the time for physical education from next session.
- The lack of systematic development of information and communications technology (ICT) skills in S1/S2 was a weakness.
- Following appropriate consultation, the course for Standard Grade English now began in S2. Whilst the school had consulted appropriately over this change, its impact on pupils who required additional support in their learning needed to be further considered.
- At S3/S4, vocational aspects of the curriculum provided well for pupils who preferred an increased emphasis on skills-based, practical learning to further their achievement.
- A good programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) was taught at all stages. Steps needed to be taken to improve the programme for race equality.
- At S5/S6, the school was increasing appropriately the availability of courses at different levels.
- Curricular and vocational guidance was strong.
- The school needed to address further the reasons for the low uptake of Advanced Highers in areas other than music.
- Pupils' understanding of running a small business, team-working and financial management was well developed through enterprise activities.

Teaching and meeting pupils' needs

Teaching had important strengths. Most teachers explained the purpose of lessons clearly and used questioning well. In a few lessons highly interactive teaching approaches were used to very good effect. Pupils were encouraged, praised and stimulated by their teachers. However, areas for improvement remained. A few teachers had broadened their approaches to include more effective methods such as cooperative learning and increased group work,

but more needed to do so. Some teachers needed to give pupils more time to prepare extended answers and to explain their understanding more thoughtfully. A few teachers did not engage pupils well and adopted a negative tone. Homework varied in quality.

To promote achievement for all, the school met pupils' needs well with particular strengths in the provision for pupils with additional support needs, and for those who preferred skills-based, practical programmes. Most teachers worked hard to support pupils' learning, for example by preparing well-pitched individual or group work. The school had very good pastoral arrangements and curricular guidance to support pupils entering the school and at key stages of transition, but in most subjects staff did not take sufficient account of pupils' learning at primary school. Support for learning staff provided high-quality, well-targeted support. They worked well with pupils in subject classes and provided effective individual and group support. Pupils with English as an additional language were well supported and made good progress. The behaviour support teacher worked well with pupils requiring assistance but needed to develop more specific behaviour targets for some pupils and involve their parents. The partnership officers employed by the council's community learning and development team made an important contribution to supporting pupils and their families. The education authority and the school needed to improve communication arrangements to ensure that statutory documentation related to pupils with Records of Needs and those requiring Care Plans was kept up to date. The school did not yet have coordinated support plans in place. For pupils with specific needs, short and long term learning targets in individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were well planned, shared with them and their parents, and having a clear impact on their progress. Classroom assistants and special needs auxiliaries provided pupils with very good support. The provision for speech and language therapy was a model of best practice.

Learning and personal development

The overall quality of learning was good across most of the school. In a few lessons, learning was outstandingly positive, but in a few others learners were poorly engaged. Most pupils were well motivated and answered questions enthusiastically. In some subjects pupils were highly stimulated by rich, dynamic and innovative learning experiences. These examples of outstanding practice needed to be shared amongst staff. Pupils were significantly less well motivated in a number of lessons where they had few opportunities to work collaboratively and exercise meaningful responsibility, choice or independence in their learning. The library resource centre made a strong contribution to learning for many pupils.

Pupils' personal development was very good. At all stages, most pupils were considerate of others. Their learning in PSHE was well promoted by staff. Parents were suitably informed about the programme for health education and personal relationships. The school had taken recent steps to give them better information about their child's personal development. The school worked hard to broaden all pupils' achievement by helping them to become more confident in working with others and to develop their self-esteem. Large numbers of pupils took part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils were involved in visits which were well linked to the curriculum. Pupils' awareness of the wider world and global citizenship was well enhanced through projects such as the nationally recognised Kamwokya partnership with a school in Africa. Some pupils participated actively in a range of appropriate opportunities for decision-making through pupil and house councils and in other representative groups, including the School Board. Many S6 pupils had additional responsibilities as mentors and buddies for younger pupils. A large number of pupils had developed an increased sense of citizenship and responsibility through fundraising for

charity.

English

Teaching was very effective and lessons stimulating. Teachers knew their pupils well and provided effective support to meet their learning needs. Pupils responded positively to the brisk pace set by teachers and were actively involved in learning, including through opportunities for them to collaborate on tasks. Teachers enthusiastically promoted pupils' reading. Pupils regularly took part in public speaking and debating competitions to broaden their achievement.

Overall, the quality of teaching was very good, and meeting pupils' needs and learning were good. Attainment was good. Particular features included the following.

- At S1/S2, the majority of pupils attained appropriate national levels in reading, writing, listening and talking. They made good progress from their prior learning.
- At S3/S4, the proportions of pupils presented and who attained a Credit or General award were well above the national averages. Pupils' results were notably better than in their other subjects.
- At S5/S6, the proportions of pupils attaining A-C grades at Intermediate 2 or Higher were below the national averages.

Mathematics

Teaching was effective in a majority of lessons but the quality was too variable across the department. Only some teachers provided sufficiently clear explanations and instructions. Coursework did not ensure pupils made appropriate progress. Pupils were well behaved and engaged in learning in the effective lessons, and they worked well with others. They had insufficient opportunities to broaden their achievement and apply their skills in different contexts.

Overall, the quality of teaching and meeting pupils' needs was weak, and learning was adequate. Attainment was weak. Particular features included the following.

- By the end of S2, only the majority of pupils attained appropriate national levels. They had not made sufficient progress during S1/S2.
- At S3/S4, the proportion of pupils who attained Credit or General awards at Standard Grade was well below the national average. Pupils' results were notably poorer than in their other subjects.
- At S5/S6, A-C grades at Higher were below the national average. The majority of pupils presented in S5 at Intermediate 1 gained A-C grades. The majority of pupils presented at Intermediate 2 did not gain an award.
- None of the small number of S6 pupils presented at Advanced Higher were successful.

Biology and S1/S2 science

Teachers gave helpful, clear explanations and enabled pupils successfully to work together and individually. Teachers used ICT effectively. Lessons were well paced to meet pupils' needs. In almost all lessons pupils were well engaged and completed the tasks set by teachers. Pupils contributed effectively by listening carefully and asking questions. Pupils' achievement was enhanced through visits, for example to the Glasgow Science Centre.

Overall, the quality of teaching, meeting pupils' needs and learning was good. Attainment was adequate. Particular features included the following.

- Pupils at S1/S2 understood how their learning in science related to real life situations. Their overall progress was variable, it needed to be more effectively tracked.
- At S3/S4, the proportion of pupils who attained a Credit or General award at Standard Grade was in line with the national average.
- At S5/S6, the proportion of pupils who attained A-C grades at Higher was below the national average. Most of the pupils presented for Intermediate 2 in biology attained an A-C grade.

Music

Teaching in class and instrumental lessons was very effective with clear, helpful explanations and use of praise. Pupils' needs were well met at S3-S6, teachers very effectively ensured pupils attained the standards required by examinations. At S1/S2, tasks and resources did not provide for sufficient progress in performing or depth in using concepts creatively. At all stages pupils were well motivated. Instrumental programmes and school ensembles had a major impact on promoting high achievement for many pupils.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was very good, and meeting pupils' needs was good. Attainment was very good. Particular features included the following.

- Standards in performing and inventing at S1/S2 were too variable.
- At S3/S4, Standard Grade presentations, Credit awards and awards at grades 1-6 were well above national averages. All pupils entered for Intermediate 2 gained a grade A.
- At S5/S6, pupils performed much better at Higher than in their other subjects. Presentations, awards at grade A and awards at A-C were well above national averages. At S6, Advanced Higher presentations were well above the national average. All pupils attained grade A.

Attainment

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 2004-2006, are included below.

³ Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

By the end of S2 attainment was adequate. Particular features included the following.

- Standards and progress varied across the inspected subjects and more broadly across the school. In most subjects, coursework in S1 did not build sufficiently on prior learning and standards and progress were not being measured appropriately.
- The majority of pupils attained appropriate national levels in reading, writing, listening, talking and mathematics.

By the end of S4 attainment was good. Particular features included the following.

- The proportions of pupils attaining English and mathematics at SCQF level 3, and five or more awards at SCQF levels 3, 4 or 5 were above the national averages and much better than in similar schools.
- Pupils following the skills-based, practical programmes were making good progress.
- The proportion of pupils who gained a Credit award at Standard Grade was well above the national average in history but below in art and design. Pupils' results in administration were notably poorer than in their other subjects.

By the end of S6 attainment was good. Particular features included the following.

- The proportions of pupils attaining five or more awards at SCQF levels 4 or 5 were broadly in line with the national averages and much better than in similar schools.
- The proportions of pupils attaining one, three or five awards at SCQF level 6 were above the national averages and much better than in similar schools.
- The proportion of pupils attaining at least one award at SCQF level 7 was below the national average and better than similar schools. Over half of all awards across the school at this level were in music.
- At Intermediate 2, the proportion of pupils who gained an award at A-C was well above the national average in French, hospitality and physical education, and well below in art and design. At Higher, the proportion of pupils who attained an award at A-C was well above the national average in computing and French, and well below in chemistry.
- No awards were well above the national average in geography at Intermediate 2 and in geography and physics at Higher.

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

4. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to pupils' welfare and provided very good pastoral care. They knew pupils individually and were skilful in meeting emotional, physical and social needs. The school had effective procedures for child protection and discouraging bullying. Pupils felt safe and were confident that issues raised would be dealt with sensitively by staff. Guidance staff had a good knowledge of pupils, assisted by interviews and informal contacts. The school had appropriate arrangements for first aid, the care of pupils feeling unwell, those requiring special assistance, the administration of medicines and acceptable use of the Internet.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>Accommodation was good. Particular features included the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space which had become available as a result of the falling roll was well deployed. • The pupil support base and the learning resource centre were well appointed and stimulating. • Disabled pupils had good access throughout the school. • The facilities for the S3/S4 vocational programmes were well designed and resourced. <p>A number of weaknesses in the accommodation, including the cramped and uninviting canteen and aspects of building security, were brought to the attention of the education authority.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The school had a positive climate with good relationships. It had a clear sense of commitment to the promotion of religious observance and worship within the Catholic faith. It needed to clarify arrangements for religious observance for pupils of other faiths or none. Pupils had a strong sense of pride in their school. Pupil and staff morale was high, but around half of the pupils felt the behaviour of pupils was not good and that they were not treated fairly in the school. Pupils behaved well for the most part, but in less stimulating lessons and in corridors a few were disruptive. Staff needed to improve the supervision of corridors to avoid incidents where pupils' safety was put at risk. The school had a strong sense of equality and fairness. It needed to explore further pupils' views about equality and fairness and respond to them. Most staff had high expectations and promoted a strong ethos of achievement in lessons, in the pupil support base, and through achievement ceremonies. The school had not yet ensured that staff training and teaching for race equality across the curriculum was delivered in line with its policy.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The school enjoyed very good partnerships with parents and the community. Particular features included the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong links with local parishes and the chaplaincy team. • The School Board and PTA very effectively supported the work of the school. • Mutually beneficial links with Bothwell Park School. • Very good curriculum links with Motherwell College. • Aspects of written reports for parents of S1/S2 pupils needed to be improved. • Pupils' study support diaries needed to be used more effectively to involve parents in their child's learning and homework.

5. Leading and improving the school

The school provided an effective education. Staff were successful in raising the achievement of pupils. For example, they had taken innovative steps to introduce a flexible curriculum for pupils who preferred skills-based, practical courses to further their achievement. Most teachers' high expectations contributed to good examination results. The curriculum and quality of teaching met pupils' learning needs well in most areas. In a few subjects staff absence and important weaknesses in teaching and learning hindered pupils' progress.

Leadership had important strengths. Across the school, effective leadership had helped the school to sustain good performance in examinations and introduce appropriate innovations to meet pupils' needs. The headteacher and his senior managers were highly committed to the school. Each carried out their management responsibilities well. Most faculty heads and principal teachers led effectively, for example in pupil support. They were instrumental in improving learning and teaching in their areas and were becoming increasingly influential across the school. Some teachers led well the development of innovative lesson approaches to engage pupils in stimulating learning activities. Leadership also had areas for improvement. Whilst the emerging approaches to improvement and innovation were encouraging, they had not been led in a sufficiently concerted way across the school to ensure consistency of improvement in all departments and high quality learning in every classroom.

Self-evaluation was adequate but improving. The headteacher had a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Over several years he had implemented a number of appropriate approaches to help staff to gauge effectiveness and improve. These approaches included a thorough annual review and improvement planning process, gathering stakeholders' views, and evaluating learning directly in a few classes. Impact, however, was inconsistent and key areas of weakness had yet to improve. All staff now needed to contribute to developing a more positive climate for self-evaluation and to recognise their individual and collective accountability for improvement. To improve learning and teaching, senior managers needed to ensure greater rigour in monitoring pupils' progress, in gathering and using pupils', parents' and teachers' views about learning, and in evaluating the quality of learning and teaching directly in class and sharing best practice.

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

Increase further pupils' achievement by:

- improving the quality of education provided by the mathematics department;
- leading improvements to the quality of learning, teaching and meeting pupils' needs across the school in a concerted way;
- using pupils' views about learning, equality and fairness to improve further the school's ethos;
- taking full account of pupils' prior learning and ongoing progress to guide coursework; and
- developing a positive climate for self-evaluation, involving all staff in reviewing performance and sharing best practice.

What happens next?

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of this report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress in mathematics. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the overall progress made by the school.

Graham Norris
HM Inspector

23 January 2007

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 promoting learning and raising achievement for all pupils.

Section 3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?	
Structure of the curriculum	good
The teaching process	good
Meeting pupils' needs	good
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Personal and social development	good
Overall quality of attainment: S1/S2	adequate
Overall quality of attainment: S3/S4	good
Overall quality of attainment: S5/S6	good

Section 4. How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	very good
Accommodation and facilities	good
Climate and relationships	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
Equality and fairness	good
Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community	very good

Section 5. Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	good
Leadership across the school	good
Self-evaluation	adequate

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 table provides a summary of questionnaire responses. Key issues from the questionnaires have been considered during 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
<p>Around a third of parents responded to the questionnaire. They were very positive about most aspects of the work of the school. In particular they thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their child enjoyed school and found work stimulating and challenging; • the school had a good reputation and teachers set high standards; • reports were helpful and staff were welcoming; • their child was treated fairly and indiscipline was dealt with effectively; and • staff showed care and concern for their child and the school was well led. 	<p>Parents had no major concerns, but around a quarter would like guidance on how to support their child with homework.</p>
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<p>Almost all of the pupils responded to the questionnaire. They were less positive than their parents, but most thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they enjoyed school and teachers explained things clearly; • at least one teacher knew them well and they would be helped if having difficulty; and • they got on well with other pupils and teachers expected them to work to the best of their ability. 	<p>Up to half of the pupils did not think that all pupils were treated fairly or that the behaviour of pupils was good.</p> <p>Around a quarter had concerns about how well they were listened to by teachers and the extent to which they had a say in the school.</p>

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<p>About half of the staff responded to the questionnaire. They were very positive about almost all aspects of the work of the school.</p>	<p>Around a quarter of staff who responded had concerns about how indiscipline was dealt with, and they would like more say in the running of the school.</p>

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

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 attaining by end of S4

		2004	2005	2006 ⁴
English and Mathematics @ Level 3	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	94	91	92
	Comparator schools⁵	90	88	89
	National	91	90	91
5+ @ Level 3 or Better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	96	92	93
	Comparator schools	87	86	87
	National	91	90	91
5+ @ Level 4 or Better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	82	72	77
	Comparator schools	67	67	72
	National	77	76	76
5+ @ Level 5 or Better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	39	32	36
	Comparator schools	23	23	25
	National	35	34	34

Percentage of relevant S4 roll attaining by end of S5

		2004	2005	2006 ⁴
5+ @ Level 4 or better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	83	83	77
	Comparator schools⁵	70	69	69
	National	78	78	78
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	53	45	43
	Comparator schools	35	33	31
	National	45	45	45
1+ @ Level 6 or better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	48	41	33
	Comparator schools	31	27	26
	National	39	39	38
3+ @ Level 6 or better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	26	28	20
	Comparator schools	14	12	11
	National	23	23	21
5+ @ Level 6 or better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	12	13	9
	Comparator schools	6	3	3
	National	9	10	9

Percentage of relevant S4 roll attaining by end of S6

		2004	2005	2006⁴
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	45	56	46
	Comparator schools⁵	38	38	35
	National	47	47	48
1+ @ Level 6 or better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	39	54	46
	Comparator schools	34	34	30
	National	44	43	43
3+ @ Level 6 or better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	27	36	35
	Comparator schools	23	21	17
	National	31	30	30
5+ @ Level 6 or better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	18	23	21
	Comparator schools	11	12	10
	National	20	19	19
1+ @ Level 7 or better	Our Lady's HS, Motherwell	9	7	8
	Comparator schools	7	7	5
	National	12	12	12

⁴ Pre Appeal

⁵ Comparator schools are the 20 schools statistically closest to the school being inspected in terms of the key characteristics of the school population.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education, 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, 1st Floor, Endeavour House, 1 Greenmarket, Dundee DD1 4QB or by telephoning 01382 576700. Copies are also available on our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

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