

**Brae High School
Shetland Islands Council**

9 October 2001

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Inspection of Standards and Quality in Brae High School Shetland Islands Council

1. Introduction

Brae High School was inspected in April and May 2001 as part of a national sample of nursery, primary and 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. In the primary department English language, mathematics and art and design were inspected, with a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics. The subjects included in the inspection of the secondary department were English, mathematics, modern languages, business education and art and design. 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 was managed, HM Inspectors assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents. They met the chairperson of the school board and groups of parents.

2. The school

Brae High School serves the parishes of North Mavine, Delting and Lunnasting, and the villages of Brae and Mossbank on the mainland of Shetland. At the time of the inspection the roll of the primary department was 107 and that of the secondary department 266. A further 35 children attended the nursery department part-time. Unless otherwise stated, evaluations in this report apply to all three departments in the school.

Parents' views

Just under half of the questionnaires issued to parents were returned. Most who responded expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school. They thought their children enjoyed school, found the work stimulating and challenging, and were well supported in their work. Almost all parents thought that the school had good accommodation and was very well resourced.

Almost all parents with children in the secondary department felt it was well led. However, many parents with children in the primary department were unhappy with the quality of leadership. Some parents thought that the school could do more to provide them with information on their children's progress and the part that they could play in their education.

Ethos

The ethos in the school was very good. Staff and pupils identified strongly with their school. Relationships between staff and pupils were very good. Pupils were polite, well-behaved and hard working. They communicated easily with adults. Almost all teachers used praise effectively to encourage pupils to produce work of a high quality. Working relationships among staff were generally good, but on occasion had been affected by difficulties between a few members of staff.

Pupils had good opportunities to take responsibilities. Many took part in fund-raising for charity. They

participated in a very rich range of extra-curricular activities. Well-organised trips added considerably to pupils' experiences. Appropriate opportunities were provided for religious observance. Attendance was above national levels.

School and community

The school was an integral part of the local community and had generally good links with parents and local businesses. Notable features included:

- a very good programme of work experience;
- well organised parents' meetings to discuss pupils' progress;
- very good international links, including successful foreign visits;
- a very supportive school board; and
- very good links with external agencies.

The school had established good relationships with local primary schools, including very effective procedures for the induction of pupils into S1. Written reports gave good information on pupils' attainment and next steps in learning. The school was quick to bring to parents' attention any incidents of bad behaviour or truancy. Almost all letters or telephone calls to parents were of a negative nature. More effort should be made to highlight the positive aspects of pupils' success and achievements and to communicate these to parents.

Accommodation

The quality of the school's accommodation was very good, and it was very well maintained. The reception area was pleasant and visitors were given a warm welcome. The school provided a bright and stimulating environment for both primary and secondary pupils. High quality all-weather pitches and regular access to the adjacent swimming pool enhanced facilities for sporting

activities. Social areas for pupils were very good. The library was spacious and well used. Security arrangements for monitoring entry to the school were ineffective.

Staffing and resources

The school was very well staffed. Ancillary staff provided very good support. Resources were in very good supply. They were well organised and used effectively.

The headteacher managed the financial resources devolved to the school very carefully and efficiently. He gave good attention to the support of priorities identified in the school development plan. Staff were very satisfied with the system used to allocate funds within the school.

3. How well are pupils performing in the nursery and primary departments?

Nursery

Almost all children were making very good progress in the key aspects of their development and learning. They listened attentively to stories and talked confidently about their experiences. They showed good skills in early reading and early writing. They were encouraged to be curious and to develop their knowledge of aspects of early mathematics.

English language

In the primary department the overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Pupils generally coped well with their classwork, but the more able needed greater challenge. Most pupils at all stages listened attentively and talked confidently to adults. However, they did not always listen sufficiently well in group discussions. Throughout the primary department almost all pupils read regularly for enjoyment and had good opportunities to discuss a wide range of texts. Some pupils at the upper stages were able to write at sufficient length and for a variety of purposes. At all

stages most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in *reading*, and some were exceeding them. Almost all pupils at the early and middle stages, and a majority at the upper stages, were attaining appropriate national levels in *listening* and *talking*. Most pupils at the early and middle stages, and a majority at the upper stages, were achieving them in *writing*. Half the pupils in P7 were attaining appropriate levels in *listening*, *talking* and *writing*.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was fair. Although most pupils coped well with their coursework, it was not always appropriately matched to their needs, and progress was sometimes slow. At the early stages pupils had good skills in working with numbers. At all stages they performed mental calculations well. However, measurement skills, including working with units, were often poorly developed. Pupils' experience of using computers to handle data was limited. Attainment in *problem solving and enquiry* was fair. Pupils had insufficient knowledge of strategies for tackling problems. Almost all at the early stages, and the majority at the middle and upper stages, were attaining appropriate national levels in *information handling*, *number*, *money and measurement* and *shape, position and movement*. Less than half the pupils in P7 were attaining appropriate levels in these areas.

Art and design

The overall quality of attainment in art and design was very good. Pupils used drawing, painting, printing and modelling materials very effectively to produce a wide range of attractive work. They were also encouraged to express their personal feelings and ideas through these activities. Almost all were developing a sound knowledge of the work of artists and designers from their own and other cultures. Many achieved very good standards when solving design problems. Most showed good skills in assessing their own work and that of others.

Information and communications technology

The following were features of pupils' proficiency in using information and communications technology (ICT).

- Pupils in P5 were using the internet effectively to find information.
- Older pupils used computers confidently to present and redraft written work.

4. How well are pupils performing in the secondary department?**Overall quality of attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was good in S1/S2 and S5/S6, and very good in S3/S4.

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Awards

At Standard Grade the proportion of S4 pupils achieving five or more Credit awards had been well above the national average for the years 1995-1999.

At Higher Grade the proportion of S5 pupils achieving three or more awards at Bands A-C had been well above the national average in 1995-1999. The number of awards at Band A per S5 pupil had also generally been above average.

Presentations for the Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS) had been low. The majority of pupils presented had achieved awards at Bands A-C.

Almost all pupils had achieved full success in their SQA modules over the years 1997-1999.

Information on attainment in the subjects inspected is given later in this report. The size of the school meant that only small numbers were presented for SQA examinations in many subjects. As a result, performance has tended to vary more from year to year than in most

schools. This report therefore makes no comment about attainment in subjects other than those inspected.

Information and communications technology

The following were notable features of pupils' proficiency in information and communications technology (ICT).

- In S1/S2 pupils made good use of computers for a variety of tasks, including accessing the internet for research purposes and for desktop publishing.
- Senior pupils made good use of ICT to find information.
- Pupils experiencing learning difficulties made good use of ICT to assist them in a number of subjects.
- Some pupils were making good use of portable computers for note-taking and project work.

5. How well are the inspected secondary departments performing?

English

Attainment

The overall quality of attainment was good in S1/S2 and S5/S6 and very good in S3/S4. Most pupils in S1/S2 and S5/S6, and almost all in S3/S4, performed well in their coursework. At S1/S2 most pupils achieved appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. Performance at Standard Grade was well above the national average. Results at Higher Grade were above the national average. Success rates in SQA modules were well above the national average. Most pupils presented for CSYS achieved awards at Bands A-C.

Courses

Courses were good at all stages.

Learning and teaching

The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. Teachers varied their teaching methods well, and often used direct teaching methods very effectively. Homework was set regularly, but was not always sufficiently challenging in S1-S4. Most pupils were well motivated and focused closely on their learning tasks. Their needs were generally well met at all stages, although the ablest were not consistently challenged at S1/S2. Assessment arrangements were very good.

Management and quality assurance

The principal teacher provided very good leadership. He had developed very good teamwork, and had given teachers very good guidance on key aspects of learning and teaching. Teachers had had good staff development on new National Qualifications. All had had their work formally reviewed. The arrangements for quality assurance were very good. The departmental development plan was not planned in sufficient detail to be an effective working document. Generally good progress had been made with implementing the previous and current plans.

Priorities for action

The department should ensure that homework is appropriately demanding. The ablest pupils in S1/S2 should be challenged more. The departmental development plan should be planned in greater detail to ensure that all development projects are successfully implemented.

Mathematics**Attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was fair in S1/S2, very good in S3/S4, and good in S5/S6. Coursework at all stages was good. Recently introduced classes organised by ability were assisting the department to build on the work that pupils had done in primary school. However, fewer than three-quarters of the pupils in S1/S2 were reaching appropriate national levels of attainment. Performance at Credit in Standard Grade was consistently well above the national average in 1997-99. Performance

at Higher Grade had been around the national average. Success rates in SQA modules had been variable, but were overall better than average.

Courses	Courses in mathematics were good from S3 to S6 and fair in S1/S2. Guidance to teachers on learning and teaching was limited. Pupils did not have opportunities to use graphics calculators.
Learning and teaching	The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. Teachers' explanations were good, and appropriate homework was set regularly. Most pupils were well motivated and worked hard, but some lessons did not encourage sufficient participation. The pace of lessons was generally brisk, and teachers had high expectations of pupils. The quality of assessment was good overall.
Management and quality assurance	<p>The department was well led. Staff were deployed well. All had had their work formally reviewed and had participated in some appropriate staff development.</p> <p>Quality assurance in the department was good overall. While the audit for the development plan was good, the plan itself had some important weaknesses. It lacked action plans and was not sufficiently focused. The department had successfully implemented its chosen priorities.</p>
Priorities for action	The department should continue with its improvements to the course in S1/S2, developing numeracy and problem solving, and ensuring that courses build on what pupils have learned in primary school. It should introduce the use of graphics calculators to develop understanding of graphs. Staff should use more interactive teaching to assist pupils' understanding.

Modern languages

Attainment

The overall quality of attainment was good. Most pupils performed well in their coursework in S1/S2 and very well in S3-S5. Almost all pupils were making very good progress. At Standard Grade pupils had been less successful in French and German than they had been in their other subjects. However, there were indications of a good improvement in results over the last two years. The proportion of awards achieved at Credit in French was above the national average in 1997 and 1999. Almost all pupils presented for French or German at Higher Grade over 1997-1999 had achieved awards at Bands A-C.

Courses

At all stages courses were very well planned. The department had recognised the need to include demanding reading texts and had introduced the study of poetry, song and plays in the foreign language. Teachers ensured a very good development of grammar for all pupils. Courses ensured progression and continuity of learning from pupils' experiences in primary school.

Learning and teaching

All pupils were hard working and very attentive in class. They co-operated fully with their teachers and participated enthusiastically in a very good range of activities. The quality of teaching in most classes was very good. However, teachers made insufficient use of the foreign language in classes. The department had developed a very good programme of assessment. Teachers monitored pupils' progress very carefully, and intervened effectively to ensure that targets were met.

Management and quality assurance

The principal teacher offered a very good lead in the development of effective learning and teaching. She and her colleagues had established a very good ethos in the department and a very high standard of work. She monitored the work of the department very effectively and included surveys of pupils' opinions to direct developments. The good departmental development plan was based on a careful audit of provision. The

department had made good progress with the implementation of earlier plans. Teachers had participated in a good range of staff development and all had had their work formally reviewed.

Priorities for action Teachers should increase their use of the foreign language in class. The department should continue to acquire reading texts of greater length and complexity, including imaginative literature. The department should strive to increase the number of Credit awards in both languages at Standard Grade.

Business education

Attainment The overall quality of attainment was good. Most pupils performed well in their coursework. At Standard Grade almost all pupils had achieved Credit awards in accounting and finance in 1997-1999. The proportion of Credit awards in office and information studies had been well above the national average in the same period. At S5/S6 pupils had generally performed as well in Higher Grade management and information studies and accounting and finance as in their other subjects.

Courses The generally good S1/S2 course provided pupils with an introduction to a range of ICT packages that they could use in other areas of the curriculum. However, it did not concentrate sufficiently on key skills that pupils required. Courses from S3 onwards were very good.

Learning and teaching The quality of learning and teaching was consistently good. Teachers explained new work clearly and varied their teaching methods appropriately. They provided extensive support for pupils, which enabled them to perform well in a wide range of tasks, but sometimes discouraged them from thinking for themselves. Homework was not always sufficiently demanding. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress was carried out thoroughly from S3 to S6. Procedures for assessment and recording at S1/S2 required further development.

Management and quality assurance	The principal teacher provided good leadership to the department. Members of staff worked well as a team. Teachers had undertaken appropriate staff development and all had been formally reviewed. Self-evaluation was generally good. The departmental development plan was overly ambitious and had important weaknesses in the way in which priority projects were set out. The previous development plan had generally been well implemented.
Priorities for action	The department should develop appropriate procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment in S1/S2. Appropriately challenging homework should be set at all stages. The department should produce a realistic departmental development plan, which indicates implementation procedures, detailed timescales and clearer criteria for judging success.
Art and design	
Attainment	The overall quality of pupils' attainment was good in S1/S2 and S5/S6 and very good in S3/S4. At S1/S2 and S5/S6 most pupils were achieving good standards in coursework. At S3/S4 they attained very good standards in coursework. During the years 1997-1999 most pupils presented for Standard Grade achieved Credit awards. Most pupils had achieved awards at Band A or B at Higher Grade.
Courses	The quality of courses was good at all stages.
Learning and teaching	Overall, the quality of learning and teaching was good. Most pupils were well motivated. The pace of learning was good in most classes. Teachers made effective use of assessment, including self-assessment and discussions between pupils and teachers. However, the frequency with which homework was set was not consistent and needed to be improved. Although pupils had some good opportunities to use ICT for finding information, they had too few opportunities to use it to create and manipulate visual images.

Management and quality assurance	The assistant principal teacher had managed the development and improvement of learning and teaching programmes, assessment procedures and resources effectively. She had made good use of performance indicators to monitor and evaluate the work of the department. She and the part-time teacher worked well as a team and had developed good working relations with other colleagues. Both had had their work formally reviewed. The departmental development plan had important weaknesses. Identified priorities, together with related criteria for successful implementation, needed to be more clearly defined and made more specific.
Priorities for action	At all stages homework should be set more frequently and more consistently. The development plan targets and related criteria for successful implementation should be made more specific. Staff and pupils should be provided with more opportunities to develop and use ICT skills.

6. How good is the curriculum?

Nursery	The curriculum in the nursery class took very good account of the key areas of children's development and learning. Staff provided a good range of valuable activities to develop children's skills in early reading and writing through play. Children had very good opportunities to develop their skills in observing and investigating.
The primary department	The curriculum in the primary department was generally good. Pupils in P6 and P7 studied French.
English language	The programme for English language was fair overall. The school had recently created a very good programme in writing. Staff now needed to develop a more consistent approach to teaching key skills in reading. Good activities in talking and listening had not yet been developed into a coherent programme.

Mathematics	The programme for mathematics was good overall. It paid good attention to most aspects. However, it sometimes lacked appropriate focus on what pupils needed to learn. It gave too little emphasis to teaching general strategies for problem solving and to using computers to handle data.
Art and design	The programme for art and design within expressive arts was good. It gave very good attention to all aspects. The visiting teacher of art and design delivered the main content of this programme very effectively. However, planning of the aspects of the programme provided by class teachers was not yet fully co-ordinated with the work of the visiting teacher.
Expressive arts	Overall, the programme for the expressive arts was good. However, aspects of the overall programme needed to be improved. Pupils generally experienced a wide range of valuable activities in art and design, music and physical education. Class teachers and visiting specialists should now plan together to create fully coherent programmes in these aspects. Teachers required more guidance in the programme for drama.
The secondary department	The overall quality of the curriculum in the secondary department was very good. The S1/S2 curriculum was broad and offered pupils a good balance of subjects. Most departments had taken good account of 5-14 guidelines to ensure that pupils could reach appropriate levels of attainment. In S3/S4 almost all pupils studied eight subjects at Standard Grade. In S5/S6 the school had provided a very good range of courses leading to new National Qualifications at Higher and Intermediate levels. Almost all departments offered courses at Advanced Higher level and some used Access courses appropriately.

7. How good is learning and teaching?

The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. Most lessons observed in the primary department and almost all in the secondary department were either good or very good. There were no major weaknesses in any lessons. Further information about lesson evaluations is given in the appendix.

Staff in the nursery class interacted very well with children to make their play appropriately challenging. They observed children regularly and used their detailed knowledge of them to plan effectively. They now needed to develop a systematic approach to recording and reporting children's progress.

Features of learning and teaching in the primary department were as follows.

- Teachers used a range of teaching approaches effectively.
- Homework was generally set on a regular basis, but practice was not consistent throughout the department.
- The wide range of activities provided by teachers were not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs. In particular, some pupils in P7 were insufficiently challenged.
- Most pupils were enthusiastic and enjoyed their coursework.
- The primary department had developed effective planning procedures for mathematics and aspects of English language. These were not being used consistently by all staff. Planning procedures for reading and other areas of the curriculum were fair.

- The primary department did not have an effective system for tracking pupils' progress, nor for assessment and record keeping. National Tests in reading, writing and mathematics were used to confirm teachers' judgements, but not always appropriately and effectively.

Features of learning and teaching in the secondary department were as follows.

- Almost all teachers offered a good range of learning activities and interacted very well with their pupils.
- They gave clear explanations and in general used questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding.
- Almost all pupils were hard working and co-operated very well with their teachers and fellow pupils.
- Although learning needs were generally very well met, the pace of learning was too slow in some lessons.
- Assessment procedures were overall good.

8. How well are pupils supported?

Care and welfare

Staff provided very good levels of support for pupils' care and welfare. They knew pupils very well as individuals and were sensitive to their needs. Very good procedures were in place to deal with situations where pupils' health might be at risk, including clear anti-bullying and child protection policies. Insufficient records were kept of any incidents or of telephone contacts with parents.

Personal and social development

Children in the nursery class were encouraged to co-operate and to show consideration for others. In the primary and secondary departments staff provided a good range of experiences through the personal and social education (PSE) programme and through topic studies in class. These activities were not sufficiently co-ordinated to provide a coherent programme from P1 to S6.

Older pupils in the primary department had good opportunities to exercise responsibilities through looking after younger ones and organising playground games. A wide range of extra-curricular activities provided good opportunities for pupils at all stages to develop personal and social skills. Although there was no formal health education programme, teachers paid good attention to most aspects of personal safety, hygiene and drugs education.

Support for learning

The overall quality of provision for pupils who experienced learning difficulties in both the primary and secondary departments was very good.

In the primary department the support for learning teacher liaised effectively with class teachers to provide valuable support for individuals and groups with particular needs. She interacted very effectively with pupils, ensuring that they made good progress. Auxiliary staff provided very good assistance. A range of external agencies provided helpful advice to staff.

Strong features of support for learning in the secondary department included the following.

- Very good contacts with primary schools, which helped provide informative profiles for pupils entering S1.
- Very good advice to a wide range of departments on meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties in their respective subjects.

- Very effective support to pupils, including higher attaining pupils, in classes, in reading groups and in tutorials targeted at meeting identified needs.
- Very good links with a wide range of external agencies.
- Very good specialist support to pupils with hearing impairment in mainstream classes and in tutorial groups.

All pupils with Records of Needs received very good support and their needs were regularly reviewed. Learning support staff provided well-organised individual educational plans (IEPs) for them and for other pupils with sustained learning difficulties. Short-term targets set for pupils in the secondary department were not always sufficiently clearly defined. Learning support staff in the secondary department had made a good start to involving teachers from relevant subject departments in drawing up IEPs.

The headteacher provided a good lead to learning support staff. He regularly monitored their work. They worked very well as a team but they did not have sufficient timetabled opportunities to liaise with the subject departments they supported or with guidance staff. Arrangements for self-evaluation were very good. The development plan was an effective working document. Good progress had been made in implementing the current plan.

Guidance in the secondary department

Provision for pupils' pastoral care was very good. Guidance teachers knew their pupils very well as individuals. They had regular and helpful contact with them through the PSE programme and through a programme of individual interviews. They worked very effectively with external support agencies. Although they had good informal contact with support for learning staff,

there was insufficient structured collaboration between the guidance and support for learning teams.

Very good provision was made for curricular and vocational guidance. Parents and pupils were given clear and appropriate guidance on course choices at key transition stages, and had very good opportunities to discuss options with guidance staff. Careers education was broad and very well structured. It included a well-organised work experience scheme, and very good support from a specialist careers adviser.

The PSE programme was fair overall. It gave good coverage to drugs education but insufficient emphasis to some aspects of personal relationships. The programme for pupils in S5/S6 was too limited in the range of activities it offered. Many elements of the PSE programme for S1 to S4 were being addressed through topics in other subject areas. However, their co-ordination needed to be improved in order to eliminate overlap and to ensure that pupils had a broad programme which built on what they had already learned.

Guidance teachers contributed comments to reports to parents and talked to pupils when subject teachers raised concerns about them. They monitored closely the progress of pupils experiencing emotional and social difficulties and provided appropriate support.

The committed and experienced guidance staff worked well as a team. However, there were some important weaknesses in the day-to-day management of the team. Guidance staff did not systematically monitor pupils' progress. They did not place enough emphasis on raising pupils' attainment across the curriculum. The remits of the promoted guidance staff did not draw sufficiently on their individual strengths. Approaches to self-evaluation within guidance were not systematic and the development plan had important weaknesses. It did not have an audit section, and projects lacked sufficient detail to ensure

their implementation. Fair progress had been made in implementing the current plan. Guidance staff had participated in a good range of staff development and all had had their work formally reviewed.

Priorities for action Short-term targets set for pupils with learning difficulties in the secondary department should be more clearly defined. The school should develop coherent programmes of health education and personal and social education from nursery to S6. The arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress and attainment should be improved. The approaches of the guidance team to self-evaluation and development planning should be improved. The headteacher should put in place systematic arrangements for support for learning staff to liaise with guidance and relevant subject departments.

9. How well is the school managed?

Overall management and leadership

The headteacher managed the day-to-day running of the school effectively and provided good leadership. His presence was evident throughout the school and he had established very good relationships with pupils, parents, staff and the wider community. He was approachable and made himself freely available at all times. However, he did not devote sufficient time to certain strategic tasks, including the direction of the senior management team. He had delegated many aspects of the management of the primary department to the assistant headteacher, but had not consistently monitored or evaluated his effectiveness. The headteacher's open and consultative style of management had contributed greatly to creating a strong sense of identity and common purpose amongst staff. However, while he responded promptly to staff and parental concerns, he did not always record the outcomes of these contacts.

The deputy headteacher was absent during the period of the inspection.

The assistant headteacher had worked successfully to foster an ethos of improvement in the primary department. He had given a good lead to developing programmes in writing and mathematics. Relationships between staff in the primary department were now positive, and teamwork was developing effectively. However, there were weaknesses in his overall management. Arrangements for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress were neither consistent nor sufficiently rigorous. Although he visited classes regularly to evaluate the implementation of the writing programme, he now needed to extend the scope of his visits to include learning, teaching and attainment.

Staff development and review

The school offered a very good range of opportunities for staff development. Almost all staff in the secondary department had participated in in-service training to prepare for the introduction of new National Qualifications in S5/S6. The education authority had not yet provided sufficient opportunities for all staff to increase their ICT skills. Almost all members of staff had had their work reviewed as part of the education authority's formal scheme for staff development and review. The school planned to review the work of all staff by the end of session 2000-2001.

School development planning

The whole school development plan had been discussed with staff and the school board, and took full account of national, regional and school priorities. However, the overall development planning process had some important weaknesses. While the chosen priorities were appropriate and focused on raising attainment, the plan lacked the detail necessary to enable them to be effectively implemented and evaluated. Secondary departmental development plans varied in quality. Members of the senior management team did not provide sufficient guidance to departments to ensure good quality

departmental development plans. A number of departments had not fully overtaken their development targets.

The high level of staff commitment to the school ensured that some departments had made good progress in implementing developments. Overall, the headteacher had effectively supported the very good progress which departments had made in implementing courses for the new National Qualifications.

Approaches to improving quality

The school had established a range of appropriate strategies to monitor and evaluate its provision. The headteacher conducted thorough annual reviews of examination performances with secondary department leaders. The headteacher and his depute were each linked to a group of subject departments, while the headteacher and assistant head were jointly responsible for overseeing the work of the primary department. All three of them had begun to monitor aspects of learning and teaching in the relevant departments. The school had produced a report on the standards and quality of its work. Staff at all stages had begun to use performance indicators for self-evaluation. In the primary department staff needed more support and guidance to ensure that pupils progressed appropriately.

10. How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, the school provided a good standard of education within a very caring and supportive atmosphere. The headteacher and staff were committed to improving attainment further and had identified a range of appropriate strategies. The positive ethos formed a good basis for further raising expectations of pupils' attainment and ensuring an appropriate level of challenge.

Key strengths

- Well-behaved, polite and hard working pupils.
- The high commitment of all teaching and non-teaching staff to the school.
- The very good provision of resources, staff and accommodation.
- The very good learning support and support for pupils with special educational needs.
- The progress in implementing courses for National Qualifications at Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher levels.
- The headteacher's open and consultative management style.

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 education authority should ensure controlled access to the building.

The following recommendations apply to the nursery and primary departments.

- The assistant headteacher and staff should improve the programmes for reading, listening and talking in English and language and for problem solving and enquiry in mathematics.
- Procedures for planning, assessing and recording pupils' progress should be improved.
- Staff should ensure that tasks are appropriately challenging for all pupils.
- Pupils should be given more opportunities to use ICT.

The following recommendation applies to the secondary department.

- The school should review its provision of guidance and the content and delivery of its personal and social education programme.

The following recommendations apply to the whole school.

- The headteacher should ensure that there is better, more frequent communication with parents on aspects of the life of the school including the celebration of pupils' success. Contacts with individual parents should be appropriately documented.
- The headteacher should improve his direction of the senior management team to ensure that appropriate strategic priorities are identified and implemented.
- The quality of development planning should be improved.
- Procedures should be developed to evaluate systematically and rigorously the quality of the school's work.

HM Inspectors will return between one and two years after the publication of this report to assess progress in meeting these recommendations. The school and education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main points for action in the report and to share that plan with parents.

David Martin
HM Inspector
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector
Northern Division

9 October 2001

See Performance Indicator data overleaf.

Appendix

Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be *very good*

- The school's ethos
- Provision of accommodation and facilities
- Provision of staff
- Provision of materials and equipment
- Organisation and use of resources and space
- The school's management of devolved finances
- The structure of the curriculum in the secondary department
- Effectiveness of the learning support
- Implementation of Special Educational Needs legislation
- Quality of pastoral care
- Quality of curricular and vocational guidance in the secondary department

We judged the following to be *good*

- Communication with parents
- Partnership with parents and the School Board
- The structure of the curriculum in the primary department
- Quality of courses or programmes in the primary department
- Quality of pupils' learning in the primary department
- Matching the teaching progress to pupils' needs and experience in the primary department
- Using assessment to guide the teaching process in the primary department
- Effectiveness of the headteacher's leadership of the school
- The secondary department's approach to evaluating its own work
- Implementing the school development plan
- Quality of the teaching process in the primary department
- The school's arrangements for development and review of its staff

We judged the following to be *fair*

- Quality of the teachers' planning in the primary department
- Guidance role in monitoring pupils' progress and attainment in the secondary department
- Effectiveness of senior promoted staff
- The primary department's approach to evaluating its own work
- The school development plan

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 in the primary department was very good in 50% of cases, good in 30% and fair in 20%. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.

The overall quality of lessons observed in the secondary department was very good in 40% of cases, good in 58% and fair in 2%. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Head of Education 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, Greyfriars House, Gallowgate, Aberdeen AB10 1LQ or by telephoning 01224 642544. Copies are also available on our web site:

www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie

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 George Gray Acting HMCI whose address is given below. If you are unhappy with the response, you will be told in writing what further steps you may take.

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