

**HMIe SCHOOL INSPECTION
MAY 2006**

**FOLLOW THROUGH REPORT
MAY 2008**

BANCHORY ACADEMY

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1. The Inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) published a report on standards and quality in Banchory Academy in May 2006. Working with the school the education authority prepared and published an action plan in June 2006, indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the report within a two year period.

In April 2008 a team of quality improvement officers visited the school again to assess what further progress had been made.

2. Continuous Improvement

The school had continued to provide a high quality educational experience for all pupils. Improvement plans reflected the HMIe action points contained in the report. Teamwork had been developed further and remained a key strength of the school.

There had been significant changes to staffing since 2006 including new appointments to the senior management team. This had created a renewed sense of direction within the school. Senior management team remits had been shared with staff. These developments resulted in there being improved and direct communication with link departments.

Standards of attainment and achievement remained consistently very high and staff across the school had adopted a wider range of learning and teaching methods. The school had continued to develop Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provision as a means of improving learning and teaching. This had enhanced the learners' engagement in classroom work, developing confidence. The school had embarked upon the process of curriculum review. New courses and levels had been introduced including options in physical education and life choices. This provision gave pupils more flexibility in their programme of study and greatly helped responding to individual pupil needs.

The school had enhanced the already extensive programme of extra-curricular activities and had experienced a number of recent successes. This

included national recognition and participation in Young Enterprise, a Stock Market Challenge and Show Racism The Red Card competitions. Pupils had also achieved highly in sporting and music events. Since the timing of the original report a particularly noteworthy initiative, Safe Drive Stay Alive, had been implemented for senior pupils in response to local recognition of this as an area of priority. The Parent Teacher Association and police had worked closely on this project.

The school was in a strong position to sustain and build on the very good practice which already existed.

2.1 English

The English department had made very good progress in addressing the recommendations.

Records of work and pupil profiles produced more reliable evidence of pupils' attainment and progress. A number of strategies had been put in place to ensure a robust learning experience for all pupils. For example, questioning skills and group work opportunities had been used to greater effect. The implementation of active learning techniques meant that pupils were focussed on tasks and this had improved attainment. These approaches to learning were commented on by pupils as being helpful and that they promoted independent thinking.

2.2 Mathematics

The mathematics department had made very good progress in addressing the recommendations.

The department now shared learning intentions with pupils and lessons were well structured. A change in staffing had brought fresh ideas to the subject. There had been a considerable focus on problem solving through events organised by the department. New resources had been introduced to enable pupils to work together and to take responsibility for their own learning. These included active learning experiences, the use of ICT and adjustment to the S1/S2 courses to improve assessment. These steps had enabled pupils to identify priorities in their own learning and to develop their reasoning and enquiry skills.

2.3 Business Studies

The business studies department had made very good progress in addressing the recommendations.

Presentation levels in Business Studies had increased overall and attainment remained strong. A new option of Business Management had been introduced at Standard Grade level to help meet pupil vocational needs. This had proved to be very popular with students and had led to the development of organisational skills.

2.4 Music

There had been very good progress made in addressing the recommendations in music.

Music staff produced guidelines and materials for S1/S2 Music. Pupils were being challenged more musically. Development work and the content of lessons made good use of technology, which had helped to improve links between performing, inventing and listening activities. This provided pupils with a broad practical experience and enabled pupils to make more informed choices as to what instruments they wished to pursue.

3. Progress towards the main points for action

The inspection report published in May 2006 identified three main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

3.1 Address the security and accommodation issues identified in this report and take immediate action to improve the changing and showering arrangements within the physical education department

The education authority and school had made satisfactory progress towards meeting this main point for action.

There had been good progress with the improvement of school security. Secure entry doors and fencing had been put in place in key areas, increasing the level of school security during class times.

There had been very good progress in relation to the provision of meeting and confidential areas. All senior managers had their own office. This established a more appropriate arrangement, particularly for discussions of a confidential nature, which had a positive impact on staff, pupils and parents. A new meeting room had been established and used effectively by groups such as Staff Committees.

At the time of producing this report, improvements to changing and showering arrangements in the physical education department had priority status by the authority. Funding had not been available to develop this facility or to provide additional social areas. There was still a need to extend the dining area and this was recognised by the authority. However, in the dining hall there had been satisfactory improvements made to the servery area to reduce waiting times for pupils.

3.2 Continue to seek improvements in the quality of learning, teaching and meeting pupils' needs

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

Since the publication of the report the school had provided regular opportunities for staff to develop learning and teaching methodologies. As a result, staff now clearly shared learning intentions during most lessons and there was an increase in active learning across the school. Pupils reported that this meant a structured and progressive learning experience.

A new system called 'Lunch and Learn' enabled staff to develop their skills in relation to a variety of learning and teaching techniques. The school had successfully used a combination of resources to facilitate this including professionals from outside

agencies as well as maximising internal existing expertise. Staff who had attended these sessions reported on them positively. This collegiate approach ensured that pupils benefited from a solution-focused approach to meeting their needs.

The largest working group in the school was that of the Learning and Teaching Committee. This body had membership from across the school and included two parent representatives. An annual event for first year pupils had been established to develop learning and thinking skills. Pupils responded well to this in evaluations of the activities, expressing that it had provided them with different approaches to developing their own learning. The working group had clear intentions of taking forward active learning to other year groups and on a less formal but frequent basis across the school. Staff were proud of this achievement and recognised the impact that it had on pupils. The work of the group had made for a more inclusive environment and gave pupils a greater awareness about themselves and their peers.

There were more opportunities for pupils to monitor and identify their own progress. As a result pupils were appropriately challenged in almost all subjects. Departments had a good understanding of A Curriculum for Excellence and strategies were in place to take this forward.

The school did very well to meet the needs of all pupils. Support staff were positive about how the school achieved this particularly through effective links with other agencies and organisations. The school had implemented new provision and made every effort to utilise Social Work and counselling services. There were very good links with associate primary schools and flexible solutions were sought in order to find the best strategies for individual pupils. Transition links through P7/S1 were highly effective. The school recognised that there was still work to be done with regards to accommodating the increased range of pupil needs. Significant progress had been made to realising this through more vocational provision and increasing work experience placements.

Subjects provided lessons that were of an appropriate pace and challenge for almost all pupils. There were opportunities across the school for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and to work independently. Staff had implemented a wider range of lesson experiences such as using group work and peer assessment in order to achieve this. ICT was also used more effectively as seen through utilisation of interactive board technology and an electronic voting system that had been introduced. This enhanced the learning experience for all pupils in the classroom.

With respect to the learning and teaching experience in the school, some lessons were excellent and most very good.

3.3 Improve the rigour and impact of quality assurance procedures through senior managers working more closely with departments

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

Clear remits for senior managers were made available to staff and these had developed a more efficient line of communication. As a result staff recognised that there was a greater degree of consistency in terms of links between senior managers and departments and for referral purposes. Pupils were also more aware of who to contact which indicated better understanding of the house structure.

Much progress had been made though there remained capacity for middle managers and senior managers to work more consistently together. It was however, recognised that relationships between the senior management team and principal teachers were overall, excellent. Staff indicated that managers were visible within the school and that they were approachable. In general there was a very positive team ethos across the school.

Staff reflected on their leadership roles. This should be enhanced as self-evaluation processes develop further. The school had a programme of quality

assurance activities. Senior managers and principal teachers were involved in class visits to monitor aspects of learning and teaching. There was capacity for the school to take this forward in order for colleagues to learn from each other.

Auxiliaries found that their training time had improved. There had been more opportunities for staff to discuss and progress their continuing professional development with their line manager. This had ensured that staff had benefited from training opportunities that enabled a more specific and structured experience for the pupils that they worked with.

The head teacher had implemented 'Listening Lunches' which all staff were invited to participate in. This enhanced opportunities for discussions of school issues. Problems were addressed openly and quickly. This had proved very popular and an effective means of ensuring all members of staff contributed to discussion due to the small numbers involved in each session.

4. Conclusion

Overall, Banchory Academy had made very good progress in addressing the main points for action set in the inspection report.

The head teacher and her team had responded positively to the recommendations made. There was a sound vision on improvement shared by all staff and there was potential for this to develop. Pupils continued to enjoy and value their education at Banchory Academy. Inclusive practice was at the forefront of the school's agenda to enshrine the future of this supportive learning community.

As a result of the very good progress made by the school, the authority will not publish further reports in relation to the 2006 HMle report.