

## **Follow-through to the HMIE Inspection of Oldmachar Academy**

### **1. The Inspection**

Oldmachar Academy was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in February to March 2005 as part of a national sample of secondary education and the resulting report was published in June 2005. Working with the authority, the school prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action indicated in the report. Arrangements in consultation with HMIE require that a follow-through report is completed within two years of the initial report and, in the case of Oldmachar Academy, this is the responsibility of the education authority of Aberdeen City Council.

### **2. Continuous Improvement**

More curricular links had been established with primary schools in English, Mathematics, Science and Modern Languages. There had been an improvement in attainment in reading but a decline in writing and maths by the end of session 2005/06. However, there had been improvement in writing and mathematics in S1 and the school is confident that there will be an increase in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of session 2006/07.

All departments had implemented formative assessment strategies to some extent and in some departments this was well developed. Changes to learning and teaching approaches had also taken place with significant differences in some departments and further identification of targets for improvement in others.

### **3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action**

The HMIE inspection report published in June 2005 identified four main points for action which the school and the education authority should address.

#### **3.1 Improve curricular links with associated primary schools and raise overall standards of attainment at S1/S2;**

The school had made adequate to good progress in meeting this point for action.

Good curricular links had been established in English, Mathematics, Modern Languages and in Science. All departments acknowledged the need to instigate such links.

A calendar of P7 Transfer arrangements had been produced and P7 visits included curricular introductions. All primary schools had submitted information about the areas where curricular support from secondary colleagues would be welcomed. This aspect had yet to be fully developed.

In English, there had been an increase in the percentage of pupils attaining level E or above in reading by the end of S2 every year since 2003. The school had evidence to indicate that this would be sustained in the current year. In writing, there was a less consistent increase in attainment due to a change in assessments but an increase in attainment in writing in S1 made the school confident that there would be an increase in the percentage of pupils in S2 attaining level E or above by the end of session 2006/07.

In Mathematics, there had been an increase in the percentage of pupils attaining level E or above by the end of S2 every year since 2003 with the exception of 2006. However, the school was able to produce evidence that the attainment of S1 pupils in session 2005/06 would result in increased attainment by the end of S2 in the current session.

In Modern Languages, there were regular opportunities for Primary and Secondary staff to meet to discuss curricular matters. Policies had been formulated and a programme of work implemented for P6/7. A P7/S1 transfer document for pupils had been introduced and a new course in French in S1 and S2 had been introduced which took more account of prior learning.

The Associated Schools Group Science Group had been re-convened and departmental staff who would be willing to work in the associated primaries had been identified and plans were in place to implement this initiative. A very successful P7 Exploring Science Day had been instigated as an annual event.

### **3.2 Improve learning and teaching through further matching of tasks to pupils' needs, better feedback to pupils, and effective use of ICT;**

The school had made good progress in meeting this point for action.

A Boost Group had been established to better meet the educational needs of a small group of targeted pupils by offering additional support from Support for Learning staff using specialist programmes to improve basic skills. There was greater involvement of SfL staff in the production of differentiated materials. Support was also given to a small number of pupils with English as an Additional Language.

In English, differentiated materials had been introduced, in particular, differentiated writing skills in S1 and S2. In Maths, there had been a review of the curriculum in S1 and S2 and there was planning to increase liaison with primary schools.

In S1 and S2 Science, new materials, including homework, had been introduced to improve pupil engagement.

Less able pupils were challenged by being given access to alternative appropriate materials in most subject areas. This was particularly the case in English, Mathematics, Science, Modern Languages, Art, Home Economics, Social Subjects, Drama, ICT and Design & Technology.

There had been effective awareness-raising of the expectations of enhanced formative assessment strategies to be implemented across the school. Some departments were already providing informed feedback for pupils.

There was greatly enhanced use of ICT across the school and a whole-school wireless network had been installed. A new suite of desktop computers had been installed and staff had opportunities for quality induction in the use of hardware and software. Trolleys of laptop computers were well used and the English Department made significant use of these with interactive whiteboard technology.

### **3.3 Improve the quality of accommodation, giving priority to reducing noise levels in the open-plan classrooms in science, to social areas, toilets and dining facilities;**

The school and local authority had made adequate progress in meeting this point for action.

The open plan areas in S1 and S2 Science had been converted into three discrete teaching areas, reducing the effect of noise on adjoining teaching areas. There had been some refurbishment of toilet provision for girls. A limited expansion of the canteen and the opening of an adjoining snack bar had reduced pressure on the dining areas. The budgetary constraints of the local authority had limited the ability of further improvements

but this was under regular review.

### **3.4 Continue to develop the use of self-evaluation for school improvement.**

The school had made good progress in meeting this point for action.

The Senior Management Team had visited classes to monitor learning and teaching and there were plans to further extend this into a coherent and systematic programme of direct monitoring of classroom practice within departments. The school was also committed to extending departmental self-evaluation and planned to involve in-school staff who had expertise in this aspect of quality assurance.

There was evidence of audit in Citizenship and Assessment for Learning and of planning for audit in other areas. There was planning for more extensive use of Quality Indicators, including their use in the evaluation by departments. Very good practice was evident in some departments and there were plans to extend this across the rest of the school in a consistent and planned programme.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the school had made good progress in addressing the main points for action identified in the Inspection Report.

The Headteacher, the Senior Management Team and the school staff, with the support from the education authority, had demonstrated a high level of commitment to improving the school.

David Leng  
Head of Service Culture & Learning  
Neighbourhood Services (North Area)  
September 2007