

**Dumbarton Academy  
West Dunbartonshire Council**

**30 March 2004**

# Contents

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	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. The inspection</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Continuous improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4. Conclusion</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>How can you contact us?</b>	<b>8</b>

# **Dumbarton Academy Follow-through Inspection Report**

## **1. The inspection**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on Standards and Quality in Dumbarton Academy in March 2002. Working with the school, the education authority prepared and made public an action plan in May 2002, indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report.

An inspection team revisited the school in January 2004 to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

## **2. Continuous improvement**

In the period since the inspection report was published in March 2002, the school had demonstrated its ability to make improvements in some aspects of its provision.

While approaches to improve attainment at S1/S2 had been effective, staff needed to continue to improve expectations and attainment at S3 to S6. Some aspects of pupils' attainment and achievements had improved, and the percentage of pupils progressing to higher education had increased to above the national average. Trends in attainment are described later in this report. Pupils' attendance had improved, although it was still below the national average. The school had also reduced the number of exclusions.

Since the inspection, the school had experienced staff changes in more than half of its departments. While the appointment of new staff was helping to extend the range of experience within the school, in some cases staff absence had placed constraints on developments within departments.

The school had been effective in continuing to build on good quality liaison with its associated primary schools to help ensure continuity as pupils progressed from P7 to S1. For example, developments in the programme for writing in English had been effective in helping to improve standards of attainment by the end of S2. Teachers of mathematics were now working more closely with staff in primary schools to develop more interactive approaches to teaching mental mathematics.

Some improvements had been made to aspects of quality assurance. Overall, however, the school had not yet established a sufficiently systematic approach to identifying and sharing good practice which would enable staff to make further improvements in learning, teaching and attainment. The education authority should provide further support to the school in improving its procedures for evaluating the quality of its work and identifying priorities for improvement.

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

The initial inspection report published in March 2002 identified six main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made in addressing each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

#### **3.1 The education authority and the school should address the accommodation issues identified in this report.**

The education authority had made good progress with some aspects of this main point for action. However, some important weaknesses remained which required attention. The education authority was preparing plans to make major improvements to the quality of its school buildings.

The education authority had upgraded the toilets for junior pupils and had installed a toilet for the disabled. One wall of the assembly hall and some rooms had been re-plastered and painted to address problems of dampness. The entrance hall had been re-decorated. The authority had renewed the flooring in several corridors and stairways, and had arranged for the flooring in science to be renewed in February. It had installed additional handrails to help meet the needs of pupils with

visual impairments. Some aspects of security had been improved. The school had extended the use of display in classrooms and communal areas. Pupils and staff had designed and made sets of outdoor tables and benches to improve the very limited social areas for pupils.

A number of matters still required attention. These included rusting window frames and outstanding aspects related to security arrangements and access for the disabled. The poor condition of the games hall had prevented its use by the school. Work to address the structural problems in the games hall was due to start in February 2004.

### **3.2 The school should improve attainment, particularly at S1/S2 and S5/S6.**

The school had made good progress in improving attainment at S1/S2. However, overall progress in improving attainment at S3 to S6 had been fair.

The school had used a number of approaches to raise attainment at S1/S2. Staff were continuing and extending work with associated primary schools to improve progression from P6/P7 to S1/S2. Collaboration on programmes for writing, for example, was having a positive impact on pupils' attainment. Several subjects had reviewed aspects of courses, learning and teaching at S1/S2, including the use of information and communications technology (ICT). Teachers were monitoring pupils' progress more systematically. There had been notable improvement in attainment in reading and writing by the end of S2. Attainment in mathematics at this stage had also improved.

All departments had also given priority to improving attainment from S3 to S6.

- Revised course guidelines for mathematics included clearer advice on learning and teaching.
- Courses in technical education provided better coverage of designing and more emphasis on aspects of knowledge and understanding. The level of challenge in tasks had been increased and pupils were performing well in their Standard Grade coursework.

- National Qualifications Intermediate 1 courses had been introduced for biology, chemistry and physics at S3/S4 to better meet the range of pupils' needs. It was too early, however, to see the impact of this change on pupils' attainment.
- Pupils were responding positively to the well-structured courses that had been introduced for religious and moral education at S3/S4.

The school had extended the levels of courses offered at S5/S6 and had reviewed its advice to pupils on appropriate progression to these courses. It was continuing to provide a programme of supported study. Performance in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations, however, had been variable since the inspection.

The proportion of S4 pupils achieving five or more Standard Grade awards had improved from below to in line with the national average. However, the proportion achieving five or more Credit awards had fallen to well below the national average.

At Higher, the proportion of pupils achieving three or more or five or more A-C grades in S5 had fallen to below the national average. Performance by the end of S6, however, was better. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A-C grades at Higher by the end of S6 had improved in 2003 and remained in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils achieving one or more A-C grades at Advanced Higher had also improved in 2003.

### **3.3 The school should include religious and moral education within its programme for pupils' personal and social education in S5/S6.**

The school had made good progress with this main point for action.

It had developed an appropriate programme of study for inclusion in the S5/S6 personal and social education (PSE) programme. The school had planned also for S5/S6 pupils to take part in a day conference on aspects of religious and moral education this session as part of the PSE programme.

### **3.4 With the support of senior management, staff should raise expectations of pupils' attainment and attitudes to learning.**

Staff had made good progress with this main point for action.

Led by senior management and guidance staff, the school was monitoring pupils' attendance, progress and attainment more effectively, particularly at S5/S6. Staff identified pupils who were under-achieving, and also those whose progress deserved particular praise. The 'Aiming High' conference for S5/S6 pupils had included input on setting targets, preparing study plans and maximising potential. The school should continue to extend its use of target-setting to all stages, as well as approaches to recognising and celebrating pupils' achievements.

Implementation of school policies on numeracy and literacy was beginning to ensure more consistent approaches to improving the quality of pupils' learning and development of study skills. Increased use of ICT was also helping to enhance pupils' learning. The school had used opportunities to introduce flexibility into the curriculum to better meet the needs of some pupils. For pupils with individualised educational programmes (IEPs), support for learning staff had involved parents and pupils more closely in the setting and review of targets. They were also working with staff from external agencies, to provide opportunities for pupils to improve their personal and social development and to achieve core skills. Good targeted support was also being given to pupils experiencing behavioural difficulties.

The school had further work to do to achieve more systematic ways of identifying and sharing good practice and ensuring that teachers are consistent in raising pupils' attainment and attitudes to learning

### **3.5 The school should implement its proposals for professional review and development of all staff.**

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

It had established an annual programme of professional review and development, in line with the education

authority's guidelines. Managers had reviewed the work of almost all staff. Arrangements were in place for new staff to be included in the programme of reviews. Staff participation in the review process was resulting in more systematic identification of teachers' development needs.

**3.6 The headteacher should establish a more rigorous approach to self-evaluation. She should ensure that the senior management team focus more on quality assurance.**

Overall, the headteacher and staff had made fair progress in addressing this main point for action.

A working group had reviewed the school's approaches to monitoring and evaluating its work and had prepared a policy on quality assurance for use by all staff. The policy set out responsibilities for staff at all levels and included a useful calendar of activities which would contribute to improving quality. However, the policy had still to be finalised and implemented. It did not contain clear advice for staff on how success should be measured.

The headteacher's annual reviews with principal teachers were now recorded more clearly, with action points identified. Senior managers' responsibilities in monitoring the work of their allocated departments were stated clearly. However, the practice of changing annually the departments for which each senior manager was responsible was not helpful in supporting continuous improvement.

Departments were at varying stages of introducing rigorous approaches to assure the quality of their work. Several had piloted different approaches to using national quality indicators to judge the quality of various aspects. However, senior managers had not yet discussed fully the outcomes of these pilots.

The headteacher should work with her deutes and all staff to finalise and implement the school's policy on quality assurance.

## **4. Conclusion**

Overall, the education authority and the school had made good progress in addressing most aspects of four of the six main points for action. All departments had made



good progress in responding to their priorities for action in the report. However, progress in improving attainment and in implementing a more rigorous approach to self-evaluation had been fair. The education authority should work with the school to ensure that arrangements for more rigorous quality assurance are finalised and implemented. All staff should continue to develop and implement approaches to raise pupils' attainment.

To confirm that the school's continuing work in these areas is effective in identifying and sharing good practice and raising expectations and attainment, the education authority should submit a report to HMIE on further progress with main points for action two and six by December 2004. Thereafter, HM Inspectors will make a further visit to the school. Parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school. HMIE will also continue to engage with the education authority to monitor progress with improvements to the school's accommodation.

Marjory Robertson  
HM Inspector

30 March 2004

## **How can you contact us?**

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education and Cultural Services, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website: ([www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk)).

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Ian Gamble, HMCI at:

HM Inspectorate of Education  
1-B95  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh  
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A copy of our complaints procedure is available from that office and on our website.

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

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

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

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