

1. The Inspection

HM Inspectors (HMIE) published a report on standards and quality in Vale of Leven Academy in September 2007. In December 2007, West Dunbartonshire Council in collaboration with the school prepared and published an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action in the HMIE report within a two-year period.

West Dunbartonshire Council Quality Improvement Service assessed the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and evaluated progress made in responding to the main points for action in the original report.

2. Continuous Improvement

The headteacher, deputies, principle teachers and staff have worked effectively as a team to take forward the recommendations contained in the report. The curriculum has been amended and improved. The improvements in learning and teaching across subjects have raised attainment in almost all subjects and particularly in mathematics and English language. Mentoring the S4 cohort has targeted meeting pupils' needs and a number of steps have been taken within departments to ensure that pupils are following courses that meet their needs effectively. Self-evaluation has improved and increased and teachers take opportunities to observe and learn from each other. The new school is ready to be opened in August 2009. Parents were fully involved at all stages of development and were fully committed to the improvement agenda.

The school is now well placed to sustain and build on the effective developments achieved.

3. Progress towards the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in September 2007 identified three points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

The school and the education authority should address the following main points for action:

3.1 *Sustain and strengthen action to improve the curriculum, learning and teaching, and meeting pupils' needs to raise attainment at all stages.*

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

The school had made very good progress in improving the curriculum, learning and teaching and in meeting pupils' needs. Some staff had undertaken training in Cooperative Learning and were using the strategies effectively to improve learning and teaching and they were sharing developments with colleagues. A working party of teachers had supported and developed Assessment is for Learning (AiFL) strategies to target consistency across the school in the approaches to assessment. The English department led staff development in the authority's approach to writing to make sure that all staff had a common understanding of literacy across the curriculum and shared high expectations of standards. The Sharing Good Practice Forum has met monthly and has had presentations from staff on effective learning and teaching and staff have had planned professional discussions on learning and teaching. This has been instrumental in ensuring a consistent approach across the school and in developing aspects of self-evaluation and reflection among staff. The work done in the school on Solution Orientated Schools was having an impact on staff and pupils and plans were in place to enable more teachers to go on the 3 day training and for the school to become 'A solution orientated School'.

The attainment in most departments had improved and in some departments there had been significant improvement. The school and individual departments were tracking and monitoring developments to ensure that these improvements were maintained and built on, especially in S5/S6. A focus on developments in the lower school had improved the 5-14 results in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils were being presented for the appropriate qualification. There was still some work to be done in this area in the science department.

3.2 Improve accommodation, including taking early action to address issues of health and safety.

The school has met this action point.

The school will move into a new building in August 2009. This is modern, spacious and has first class teaching areas. It is Eco friendly and has all the facilities to ensure that learning and teaching facilities for the 21st century are fit for purpose. Staff, pupils and parents were enthusiastic about the move to the new school. Staff and pupils were very pleased with the design of the school to which all members of the school community had contributed.

Since the time of inspection the security in the old building had been improved, including additional fencing around the playground. Toilet facilities for boys and girls had been improved.

3.3 Extend the use of self-evaluation to share good practice in learning approaches and meeting pupils' needs more consistently across the school.

The school had made good progress towards meeting this action point.

There is now a consistency in approaches to self-evaluation across the school and across individual departments. The senior management team has a more rigorous approach to classroom monitoring with an emphasis on the quality of learning and teaching. Peer observations were taking place and the school has plans to formalise this. Attendance was monitored and had improved. Departments had developed a culture of self-evaluation and as a result had reviewed and revised the quality

calendar. How Good is Our School (3) was being used as a base line for individual teachers and for departmental evaluation and improvement. Evidence presented by the school and the senior management team indicated that learning and teaching and course work had improved as a result of self-evaluation procedures. The Good Practice Sharing Forum and other working parties had been effective in promoting best practice and helping teachers reflect on improvements. Pupils had been involved in self-evaluation and were involved in target setting, particularly in the upper school. The school has plans to further develop this area.

Capacity for Improvement.

The school had made very good progress in all aspects of learning and teaching. All teachers had been given training to ensure that there were consistently high standards of expectations. The school had purchased additional hardware and software to enhance the use of ICT as an integral aspect of work in all curriculum areas. Additional staff training ensured that all staff were confident in the use of ICT to deliver a challenging curriculum for all pupils. A continued commitment to develop Co-operative Learning and Assessment is for Learning strategies would ensure that the improvements in learning and teaching and pace of learning will continue. In most subject areas attainment had improved and the science department now have the capacity to improve their attainment. The school is well placed to continue this work.

4. Conclusion

With effective support from West Dunbartonshire Council Quality Improvement Service, Vale of Leven Academy has responded well to the recommendations of the HMIE report. There have been improvements across all aspects of school work under the very effective strategic direction of the headteacher. Leadership at all levels has supported these improvements. Almost all Principal Teachers have embraced distributive leadership in their departments. Teachers and pupils have shown initiative and the results have ensured that they were able to undertake the recommendations within the agreed timescale. The school is well placed to continue the improvements achieved to date.



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