

Dunoon Grammar School

Standards and Quality Report

Session 2008-09

Foreword

It is my pleasure, as the new head teacher of Dunoon Grammar School to present the Standards and Quality Report for Session 2008-9. This session has once again been a very busy one for staff and pupils and this report reflects the hard work of all within the school. I have been very impressed by the maturity and politeness of the vast majority of our pupils and the positive relationships existing between staff and pupils. I hope that in reading it you will appreciate that much is being done to develop our young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge my gratitude to staff, parents and pupils for all that they do to ensure that the good name of Dunoon Grammar School is maintained and enhanced within our community and further afield. The report follows the format of the new style of HMIE reports.

W Stewart Shaw

Purpose

This report, on the Standards and Quality of the work within Dunoon Grammar School, informs the reader about the school's major activities, achievements and key priorities overtaken in session 2008-09. It also lists the improvement priorities for session 2009-10.

How evidence was gathered

Evidence for this report has been gathered from various sources:

- The Local Authority Review of the School
- The school improvement plan
- Published statistical information
- Internal school evaluations

1. The School

Dunoon Grammar School is a non-denominational secondary school which serves the Peninsula of Cowal. It takes pupils from our 11 associated primaries: Dunoon, Kirn, St Muns, Sandbank, Strone, Lochgoilhead, Strachur, Kilmodan, Tighnabruaicn, Inellan and Toward. In September 2008 the school roll was 1008.

For session 2008-09 the teaching complement was 72 full time equivalent. There is support staff comprising teachers from Cowal Network Support Team, administration and clerical staff, technicians, librarian, classroom assistants and ASN support. We are also supported by a School Social Worker and Campus Police Officer.

2. Particular Strengths of the school identified in the school review

- The head teacher's engagement with the whole school community in the development of values and vision to take the school forward.
- The number of friendly and confident learners who engaged well with staff and visitors to the school.
- The clear and obvious commitment of most staff to the school and its learners. This was evidenced for example in the large number of extra curricular activities and in the good staff attendance at whole school events.
- The very good facilities offered by the new school environment.
- A very supportive parent body.
- An extremely helpful and committed support staff, classroom and ASN assistants.

3. Examples of Good practice

- Development of interdisciplinary studies recognising the Scottish Dimension of the Curriculum - Finalists in the Homecoming category of the Scottish Education Awards – the History/Business management and Computing initiative showcased on ACE and Learning & Teaching Scotland websites.
- The contribution to the local community of pupils and staff.
- The development of global citizenship through the well-established German Exchange and Costa Rica Trip as well as the Malawi interdisciplinary study.
- The cross-sectoral work of departments to support links between our partner primaries and the school, especially in English and Art.
- The charitable work of pupils, supported by staff.

4. Learning and Achievement

Pupils in S6 have produced the best performance the school has had in recent years for 3+ and 5+ Higher results. It is gratifying to note that these are better than both Argyll & Bute and nationally. S4 results were not as good as in previous years but we achieved better than predicted by our CAT scores and performed well in relation to schools of similar background. In S5, our 5+ Higher is better than last year's performance but still not reaching Argyll & Bute figures. (See Appendix 1)

The local authority review noted that “The learning experience overall was very varied. There were some examples of excellent and innovative teaching that effectively engaged learners. Many lessons had poor pacing and a lack of engaging structure.”

In addressing these we have retrained Staff in teaching and learning techniques from the national *Assessment is for Learning* programme using one of Scotland's leading educational trainers, Mr I Smith. We issued all staff with his book "Asking Better Questions".

During the course of the session 10 members of staff undertook Cooperative Learning training which brings our total trained to 13. Our target is to train all staff by August 2010. During the course of next year 50% of our staff will be forming Teacher Learning Communities to further embed our active learning strategies. A further major strategy is to engage staff to reflect on learning using the recent HMle publication "Opening up Learning to engage in Leading Learning".

Wider achievement opportunities are provided by all departments and the school intends to produce a booklet detailing these. The wide range of extra-curricular activities within the school enhances pupils' learning experiences.

5. Curriculum and Meeting Learning Needs

Our pupils study a suitably broad range of subjects which meets their needs very well. Staff have made a good start to planning what needs to be done to introduce the national programme *Curriculum for Excellence*. They have started to match up their existing courses to the guidelines provided by Learning and Teaching Scotland, and have endeavoured to work collaboratively between departments to add relevance to what is being taught. Some departments have been particularly innovative and creative in developing cross-curricular initiatives. The school has been increasing the range of courses available at S3-5. It has introduced Skills for Work courses in collaboration with Argyll College in S3 and 4. Some departments have moved from presenting at Standard Grades to Intermediate 1/2. We have extended Core PE into S5. In addition, working together with our primary partners and The Local Authority *Determined to Succeed* Educational Support Officer the school developed a transition unit of work to improve continuity and enhance our already extensive liaison programme. Staff often design course-inputs from invited guests, many of whom are local, to make courses more relevant.

In a majority of lessons observed by the Local Authority Quality Improvement Team reported that tasks and resources were matched to the needs of learners. Across the school, teachers and support staff ensure that the learning needs of most children are well met. They give good support to those who are having difficulties with any aspects of their work. Staff in the Pupil Support Department are very effective in identifying pupils who have additional support needs. They plan the support for these young

people carefully. Procedures are in place to ensure that all teachers are aware of strategies to support individual children with additional support needs.

6. Staff working with others to support young people's learning

Parents are very supportive of the school, especially The Parent Council and the Pipe Band committee. Through the website, letters, our newsletter and the local press the school is providing better communication to parents and the community. The school has good working relationships with our partner agencies to support our most vulnerable pupils. Partnership agreements have been drawn up indicating working agreements between the school and these agencies. Many local businesses take pupils for work experience. Former pupils, business people and professionals support the Careers programme by participating in our "I can do anything" conference. Well-established links with our Partner Primary Schools supports all young people at transition. An extended support programme for our most vulnerable pupils is provided in conjunction with the Area Network Support Team.

7. Staff and Young People Improving their Community

The school has developed a number of links with the community. As a result of the local authority review, direct links with the Council's Community Learning and Regeneration team are better established. Links have been made with voluntary organisations such as Envirokirk and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme to enhance pupil learning. Regular parent surveys are now being undertaken to help inform our improvement agenda. Year Group Councils and the School Council give pupils an opportunity to express their views. As yet, however, pupils do not see these councils as having impact. The school Eco-committee and the Young Enterprise Team made inroads to raise the profile of the need to improve the environment. The school bands, choirs and individual pupils are regularly invited to perform at events within the community. The school has a good reputation for the high standards of public performances such as concerts, musicals, and pantomimes. The school is playing a major part in supporting the redevelopment of the Burgh Hall.

Over the year, staff have been working hard to improve the way they evaluate the work of the school. Senior managers have begun a programme of observing lessons, giving constructive feedback, and engaging staff to reflect on young people's learning. This has to be consistently embedded onto practice. Teachers set targets for pupil's attainment in S3-6, and in the best cases monitor their

progress. This has to be more systematically undertaken by all staff. Most departments have conducted surveys to gauge pupils' views about their learning experiences and in light of these have made adjustments to their curriculum. Pupils commendably take responsibility for charitable fund raising, supporting local, national and international causes.

8. High expectations of All Young People.

Staff set high expectations for pupils and encourage them to work to the best of their ability. Many provide supported study sessions for pupils undertaking SQA examinations throughout the year and during the Easter holidays. Staff, however, must engage more regularly with pupils individually to discuss how to improve their learning.

Motivational conferences are regularly held to support pupils learning.

The local authority review identified that "staff behaviour management skills were less well developed and this resulted in a slower, less challenging learning experience. The school should ensure that appropriate staff training on behaviour and classroom management is put in place and followed through by the senior leadership team."

As a result we have undertaken a programme of training in Assertive Discipline Techniques, introduced a Duty Rector Support System, a work-out zone within Pupil Support (Behaviour) and various strategies to support individual pupils with behavioural challenges.

9. Planned Improvements

Through consultation with pupils, staff and parents the school has produced its shared vision, values and aims statement. Priorities for improvement are identified in the school's Strategic Improvement Plan.

The key areas of focus for session 2009-10 are:

Priority 1: A Curriculum for Excellence

Priority 2: Learning & Teaching

Priority 3: Self Evaluation

Priority 4: Pupil Support

Priority 5: Leadership

Appendix1: Attainment Figures

SQA Results 2009

	School	Argyll and Bute	Scotland
In S4 5+ Standard Grades 1-6	92	92	91
5+ Standard Grades 1-4	80	81	77
5+ Standard Grades 1-2	34	35	35
In S5 1+ Higher Grades A-C	46	45	40
3+ Higher Grades A-C	21	23	23
5+ Higher Grades A-C	7	9	10
In S6 3+ Higher Grades A-C	37	35	31
5+ Higher Grades A-C	24	23	20
1+ Advanced Higher	10	16	13