Community Services: Education

Follow-through Inspection of Oban High School Argyll and Bute

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1. **The Inspection**

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Oban High School in May 2004. HMIE require that a follow-through report is completed within two years of the initial report and, in the case of Oban High School, this is the responsibility of the education authority.

Members of the education authority’s quality improvement team visited the school prior to the publication of this report. These visits assessed the extent to which the school had continued to improve the quality of its work, and evaluated progress made in responding to the main points for action in the report of the inspection.

2. **Continuous Improvement**

The head teacher has a very clear vision for the school and is fully supported by the quality improvement team in implementing her agenda. Quality improvement officers from the education authority have supported a number of aspects of the work of the school since the inspection. These include staff training and advice and support for departmental staff.

Since the HMIE Inspection of Oban High School the senior management team has changed. The school is now operating under the leadership of the head teacher and four depute head teachers. Two new depute head teachers and a new senior depute head teacher have been appointed. There have also been changes at principal teacher level. The school has appointed a number of new ‘faculty’ heads of department (subject) and put in place a new structure for pupil support.

The extended pupil support team is led by a depute head teacher and consists of the learning support team, behaviour support team and six year group teams. Each year group team consists of a link depute head teacher, a head of year and a number of tutors. Pupils have been allocated to tutor groups of 20 or less across each year group and almost all staff are tutors providing extended pastoral support. The school has plans to continue to develop the role of the tutors and the extended support team. An extensive pupil questionnaire was developed in May 2005 based on the desired outcomes for the pupil support system and personal, social and health education (PSHE). This highlighted many areas of improvement and assisted the school in focussing on further areas for development. It is to be repeated on an annual basis. The school also has plans to continue to develop further the effectiveness of the PSHE course and to build on the good relationships it
has built up with Chaplains and other community groups. Its nationally recognised religious observance conferences will continue to be developed with a focus on quality and innovation.

The head teacher’s clear vision of leadership and team working has been reflected in the school’s approach to continuous improvement. Since the inspection the senior leadership team, which comprises the senior management team, heads of department and heads of year, has been involved in empowering teamwork and effective leadership at all levels. Quality improvement officers have facilitated leadership and team building events for members of the senior management team and for heads of department. Some staff have also taken part in the leadership training offered by the education authority and this opportunity is to be made available to other members of the senior leadership team.

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

The inspection report published in May 2004 identified four 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 **Review the remits and deployment of senior managers to ensure their involvement with departments in sustaining and improving further teaching and pupils’ attainment at S1 to S4.**

The school has made very good progress towards meeting this main point for action. Supported by the education authority the school has given high priority to the development of shared leadership and team working. There is very effective leadership and collegiate working within the school and the consistency of approach within the senior leadership team is an example of very good practice.

The remits of senior managers have been revised and all of the senior management team are now fully engaged with departments in leading further improvements in learning and teaching and pupil attainment. Link members of the senior management team attend departmental or faculty meetings and are engaged with the departments in raising expectations and attainment. They meet annually with the head teacher and head of department to discuss performance in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations and are involved with departments in developing action plans to address pupil under-performance where appropriate. Within the school there is a very strong focus on monitoring pupil progress and on providing support and challenge to pupils. Senior managers work with departments to identify and agree strategies to improve attainment. Depute head teachers, heads of department and heads of year continue to monitor and identify pupils who are under-achieving. Senior managers arrange follow-up coaching and mentoring for those pupils who require it.

Depute head teachers lead a number of developments across the school. One depute head teacher supported by the education authority, is taking forward the national *Assessment is for Learning* programme within the school.
This has led to a range of strategies being used in classrooms which are continuing to raise expectations and achievement. Plans are in place to develop this initiative further. The school is also piloting the use of personal learning planning with S3 and S4 and has plans to develop this process further. Another depute head teacher leads a working group to examine possible alternative curricular structures as one of the measures which could be used to increase the pace of learning in S1/2. As a result of this geography, mathematics and modern languages will start Standard Grade courses at Christmas of S2. A third depute leads the development of information and communications technology (ICT). Computers have now been updated in all classrooms and all departments have access to interactive whiteboards and data projectors. Staff value access to e-mail which enables swift effective communication. To provide opportunity for professional development and the sharing of good practice three groups of heads of department meet with a lead depute head teacher. These group meetings are a forum for detailed discussion on future developments within the school.

3.2 Improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of guidance and ensure a more integrated approach to support for pupils

The school has made very good progress towards meeting this main point for action. It has established an effective holistic approach to pupil support through its extended support team. Pupils meet daily with their tutor, and at least once per year and at transition stages with their head of year. Groups of pupils may also be brought together to discuss with a head of year, depute head teacher or a volunteer mentor issues such as their progress towards attaining their targets or career aspirations. Tutors and heads of year know their pupils well. Depute head teachers are kept well informed by heads of year and there are weekly learning and behaviour support meetings which enable improved tracking of pupils’ progress. Communication between the support team and other members of staff has improved and staff value the use of e-mail to keep them informed. Teamwork has been enhanced through training sessions involving the entire support team.

3.3 Improve the quality of the PSHE programme for all pupils, the provision of religious and moral education (RME) for S4 and S5 pupils and physical education for S5 pupils

The school has made very good progress towards meeting this main point for action. Led by the new principal teacher of RME/PSEd, the PSHE programme is being extensively revised and improved in terms of the teaching approaches, progression and key concepts covered. The school has an extensive staff development and training programme to improve the consistency of use of appropriate learning and teaching approaches. Additional time slots for meetings of heads of year and tutors have been built into the school calendar. The principal teacher of RME/PSEd systematically visits all tutor groups as do heads of year and link depute head teachers evaluating the effectiveness of teaching approaches and materials used. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about activities such as preparing for presentations in school assemblies where visitors are regularly invited to
present on a theme. Staff use the regular assemblies to celebrate pupils’ success and achievements.

Provision of RME has been extended to include S4 and S5. Staffing for the teaching of RME has been enhanced, departmental accommodation refurbished and ICT equipment upgraded. The S1/2 course has been reformed with a major focus on Personal Search and strategies to improve learning and teaching are now incorporated throughout the school. In S3/4 all pupils undertake a National Qualifications (NQ) course on Making Moral Decisions at Intermediate 1 or 2. Local clergy and members of a community group are involved on a regular basis. In S5 all pupils undertake a short course on moral issues. Standard Grade Religious Studies was introduced in S3 for the first time in session 2005/06 as was Higher Philosophy in S5/6. Increased numbers of pupils have chosen these courses for session 2006-07.

Adjustment in timetabling provision now supports all pupils in S5 to attend physical education.

3.4 Provide appropriate opportunities for religious observance

The school has made very good progress in meeting this main point for action. Weekly assemblies are held for all year groups with a different ‘thought for the day’ theme. Chaplains regularly lead these assemblies and often bring outside visitors. Formal services continue to be held for all year groups at Christmas and Easter.

The school continues with its highly successful one-day religious observance Conferences for S1, S3 and S6. These high quality conferences have been recognised nationally as good practice by Learning and Teaching Scotland and are organised jointly by school staff and chaplains. Workshops at the conferences are delivered by members of the team and individuals from the wider local and national community.

The school continues to develop partnership working with the nationally acclaimed inter-faith ‘Hope to Oban’ project. The project’s youth workers provide a regular and innovative service to the school through participation in assemblies, some classes and the provision of lunchtime, evening and weekend activities for pupils.
4. Conclusion

The school, with the support of the education authority, has made very good progress in meeting all of the main points for action contained in the HMIE report of May 2004.

Community Services: Education will continue to work with the school to ensure continuous improvement as part of its quality monitoring procedures.

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