

# Foreword

HMIE visit a sample of primary and secondary schools every year to find out how they are performing. They publish a report giving evaluations of pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school and the environment for learning. The report informs you about the key strengths of the school, its capacity for further improvement and sets out the main points for action.

HMIE inspected Elgin Academy in February 2003 and published their report in April 2003. The report can be accessed either from the school or on the HMIE website ([www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk)).

Following publication of this report, the school and the authority are required to address the HMIE recommendations (Main Points for Action) and thereafter the authority is required to inform parents on progress.

This report tells you about the progress made by the school in addressing each of the main points for action identified in the original HMIE report. It also includes evaluations of other areas where the school is improving or has the capacity to improve.

This report uses the following word scale to make clear the evaluations made by Quality Improvement Officers in partnership with HMIE.

<b>Very good</b>		Major strengths
<b>Good</b>		Strengths outweigh weaknesses
<b>Fair</b>		Some important weaknesses
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>		Major weaknesses

Where used the following words describe numbers and proportions:

<b>Almost all</b>	=	Over 90%
<b>Most</b>	=	75-90%
<b>Majority</b>	=	50-74%
<b>Less than half</b>	=	15-49%
<b>Few</b>	=	Up to 15%

I hope you find this report helpful and informative

Donald Duncan

Director of Educational Services

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## **Educational Services**

### **Follow-through report for Elgin Academy**

**April 2005**

#### **Introduction**

Elgin Academy was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in January and February 2003 and the resulting report was published in April 2003. As required, this follow-through report is produced by the local Education Authority within two years of the publication of the original report. The report has been validated by HMIE following a visit to the school in February 2005.

Since the original inspection new principal teachers have been appointed in Physical Education, Physics, Art and Design and Modern Languages. Eleven new members of staff have also taken up post.

#### **Continuous Improvement**

##### **Attainment**

The overall quality of attainment remains good.

Since the initial inspection, 5-14 levels of attainment in reading and writing have remained constant while there has been a decline in attainment in mathematics. Attainment in reading and writing remain below the national average while attainment in mathematics is above the national average. In national qualifications the school and authority are aware of a downward trend in the number of pupils attaining both 3 highers in S5 and 5 highers by the end of S6. This matter will continue to be addressed by the school and education authority staff working together.

##### **Leadership and Self-evaluation**

The leadership of the school by the headteacher is good. He has adopted a more collegiate role for the senior management team (SMT) and delegates responsibility well. Members of the SMT are clear in their current remits and in some instances have acquired a greater role in school improvement. This aspect of the role should now apply to all members of the SMT. In taking forward their role, the depute head teachers need to be much more proactive in a number of areas including

- projecting the vision of the school;
- emphasising the positive behaviour of almost all the pupils in Elgin Academy;
- being more involved in evaluating the impact of departmental development planning; and
- focussing more on learning and teaching within departments.

The school has established a number of areas that have resulted in improvement for the school:

- the recent appointment of a new principal teacher of Physical Education has had a significant effect on the number of extra curricular activities offered by the school. A number of other staff have also introduced lunchtime activities. Together, this has had a positive impact on the ethos of the school.
- the school has run a programme for the past two years for its Christmas leavers involving one day in school, two days in college and two days work experience which has been well received by pupils and parents. This has resulted in a much more productive experience for this group of pupils.
- in June 2004, as part of a Moray initiative, 25 pupils started on a vocational course at Moray College in place of one of nine standard grades. Early indications show that is having a positive effect on the majority of the pupils involved, with a number of pupils showing improved behaviour.
- the school now has very well established links with a school and area in South Africa. This has developed from involving solely cultural links to creating curricular links in a number of subject areas. It has also proved to be an excellent focus for raising the issue of race equality.

In addition, there are a number of recent initiatives which, while not fully evaluated, have produced early positive feedback from staff and pupils. These include:

- five subject departments, namely business studies, drama, geography, mathematics and physical education, are participating with associated primary schools in a national initiative on formative assessment as part of their focus on learning and teaching.
- in August 2004 the school introduced the Thinking Science programme for all pupils in first year.

## **Progress with Main Points for Action.**

### 1. The school should review and relaunch its positive behaviour initiative.

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

The introduction of a time-out system has been a positive step in behaviour management. Pupils are no longer given lines or punishment exercises. They are made aware of the consequences of misbehaviour in class. Warning and subsequent removal to time-out prompts an immediate letter home to parents or carers. In time-out pupils are asked to reflect on their behaviour. The time-out system allows teachers to teach classes free from disruption which has a positive effect on other pupils. Emphasis has been placed at staff meetings on ensuring consistency of application of the time-out process.

In parallel with the time out system a good rewards system operates with merits rewarding positive behaviour in class. Postcards are also sent home to acknowledge good behaviour. The system works most effectively in S1/S2 but to a lesser extent in S3/S4. Early contact with parents has been established as part of the positive behaviour procedures and parental feedback has indicated that this early involvement is very much welcomed.

There has been some use of alternative curricula and flexible exam arrangements to help meet the needs of some pupils. There is also growing evidence of the school working effectively with agencies outwith the school to address the needs of a number of pupils. These include regular monthly meetings between school staff and social work.

Senior staff in the school should continue to emphasise the positive impact these initiatives are having and raise awareness of the good behaviour by almost all of the pupils in the school

2. The education authority should address the accommodation, and health and safety issues contained in this report.

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

The corridor in the technical subjects area was re-floored and all utility cut-offs were checked to ensure they met safety guidelines. The issue of congestion at various points within the school has also been addressed with senior students helping considerably in this area. The use of accommodation has been improved and all English classes are now taught within the English department. There are, however, still some concerns regarding the appropriateness of some of the accommodation with regard to fabric and furnishings. However Elgin Academy has been identified as the Moray secondary school to be replaced by 2007/2008

3. To improve attainment in modern languages at Standard Grade the school should review its arrangements for providing continuity of learning foreign languages for all pupils in S1/S2.

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

Attainment in French has improved considerably at Standard Grade, with the performance at grades 1-2 and grades 1-4 being the best of the last 5 years. Attainment in German has also improved. Attainment in Spanish remains unsatisfactory.

At Higher the pupils presented did well in modern languages. The school, however, should evaluate the reasons for the low uptake of pupils at higher for modern languages, with a view to improving uptake in future.

The practice of pupils dividing their time between two languages in S1/S2 has ended. Instead of two periods of two different languages, pupils now study three periods of one language, either French or German. With only a small number of exceptions this is the same language that pupils studied in primary school. Evidence from classroom teachers is that this is already having a beneficial effect in terms of pupils' progress with their chosen modern language.

The principal teacher has made a very encouraging start to her role showing very good leadership and taking positive actions to address key issues. This should be continued, and supported by the school.

The local authority will now evaluate pupil experience in modern languages in associated primary schools with a view to helping secondary staff build on pupils' knowledge and skills more effectively.

4. Existing good practice in tracking pupils' progress, planning for improvement and self-evaluation should be replicated in all departments.

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

With the support of a depute headteacher, a group of principal teachers have assisted with the development of systems for tracking pupils' attainment within the school. The local authority has purchased specific computer software to help in this process. All staff now have access to pupil attainment data at S4 for candidates in S5/S6. Guidance staff now use this information much more effectively and monitor progress. These scores are also now used to inform pupil choice for S5/S6. There is evidence of some

departments using baseline information effectively to track pupil progress but this needs to be carried out in a more systematic fashion throughout the school.

The head teacher has given a strong lead to the area of self-evaluation and improvement planning. Good opportunities have been provided in this area particularly in the analysis of attainment data. All departments share their departmental plan with their link member of the SMT and progress with the plan is now a focal point of discussion between the department and SMT. However, both departments and the SMT link members need to be more effective in ensuring that the implementation of the departmental plan secures specific improvements for pupils.

5. The management team should continue to extend monitoring procedures to encourage a good pace of learning, appropriate challenge and consistency in behaviour management across all classes.

The school has made fair progress with this main point for action.

A classroom observation group was formed which produced a policy which was subsequently agreed by all staff. The school has now in place a monitoring system where all teachers are observed at least two times per session; once by their line manager and secondly by a teaching colleague. Feedback from staff has been positive. As a result of the overall process there has been an increase in the sharing of good practice amongst staff and this should continue to be encouraged. This now needs to be translated into improved classroom practice.

In addition, members of the senior management team followed a class for a day and this had a positive impact in identifying and addressing issues with a small number of pupils.

Overall, however there remains a need for a greater focus on learning and teaching, and ensuring appropriate pace and challenge. Learning and teaching requires to be at the core of discussions at school and departmental level in order to help raise attainment and meet the needs of all pupils more effectively.

## **Conclusion**

Overall the school has made good progress in addressing the main points for action. Consequently neither the authority nor HMIE will publish any further reports in connection with the 2003 HMIE report. Authority staff, however, will continue to be involved with the school on an on-going basis to help make further improvements and address the issues raised in this report.

## Contact Details

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You can find out more information on the work of HMIE and their role in Scottish education on their website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk). Or by contacting:

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