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Introduction

A series of visits by Authority Officers had taken place to support the school, including a Follow Through Review from Wednesday 14 to Friday 16 April. The purpose of these visits was to evaluate the school's progress against each of the four main points for action as identified in the HMIE Report which was published in November 2009. The evaluation took the form of a number of interviews with the senior leadership team, principal teachers, teachers and support staff. Groups of pupils were also interviewed. In addition, the Authority Team reviewed school documentation and carried out 30 classroom observations across 13 departments in the school.

1. Improve self-evaluation to ensure it has a positive impact on teaching, learning and achievement across the school.

Action to Date

There had been engagement with all staff to agree a small number of key features of effective learning and teaching and pupils' views had also been taken into account. This had been followed through with principal teachers during review meetings. All departments had a quality calendar in place with an appropriate range of monitoring activities identified across the school year. These included attainment and other data on pupil performance as well as classroom observation, sampling of students' work and sampling pupils' views on aspects of learning, teaching and coursework. A development session had been held for principal teachers to support them in using the quality calendar effectively. As a result there was a greater awareness throughout the school of the importance of self-evaluation and staff were more aware of what constituted good self-evaluation. For some departments these processes were not new, but others were working hard to develop effective practice. As departments work with these calendars there was a need to share good practice across the school to improve consistency of approach.

There was clear evidence that the senior leadership team had been more rigorous in supporting and challenging their link departments. Learning and teaching and self-evaluation were key topics for departmental meetings and, as a result of engagement with principal teachers on the effective use of departmental time, some departments had changed times and length of meetings to allow for fuller discussion. Classroom observation by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was now more focussed with feedback provided to staff. There was also evidence of principal teachers monitoring classes and sampling pupils' work. The headteacher had provided feedback to the school as a whole. Additional departmental review meetings were introduced in March to evaluate progress with departmental self-evaluation and tracking of pupil attainment. The implementation of a quality calendar for the SLT would help to provide greater coherence to the monitoring schedule and ensure that issues identified are followed up.

Outcomes and Impact

Pupils reported that there had been a number of positive changes since the inspection, such as lesson aims being highlighted at the beginning of lessons and "starter questions" being used in some classes. The SLT was more actively involved in monitoring classes with a specific focus on key improvements in learning and teaching. The SLT was taking a more rigorous approach with their link departments. Agendas were more focussed on improving learning and teaching, and more opportunities were being taken to ascertain pupils' views.

Future Action

The school will:

- Continue to work with departments to ensure that self-evaluation becomes embedded.

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- Follow through on self-evaluation calendars and plan actions on the basis of evidence provided to improve outcomes for pupils. The creation of a quality calendar for SLT would facilitate this work.
- Share practice in self- evaluation to achieve greater consistency across the school, for example, in approaches to involving students, and in identifying evidence of the impact of initiatives.
- Ensure that all staff, including support staff are appropriately involved.

2. Build team working across the school to meet the learning needs of all young people more effectively.

Action to date

Following the inspection an Action Plan had been prepared and several positive developments had taken place in the intervening period. Support for Learning and Guidance were now under the management responsibility of one DHT thus allowing for a more strategic approach in pupil support. A whole school development session on inclusion was delivered by the Head of Educational Support Services and staff had found this useful in clarifying the development agenda. Classroom observations indicated that change was taking place, though this was variable in quality across departments. It was encouraging that a number of departments were identified as demonstrating good practice in terms of providing appropriate learning activities matched to pupils` needs and inclusion. It was important that these teachers were used to demonstrate and spread effective practices across the school. The Support for Learning Department had produced a vision statement for all staff. The roles and remits of SfL staff, both teaching and support staff, had been agreed by the school`s SfL team and circulated widely within the school. As a result a number of departments were now making better use of auxiliary support within classes. Overall there appeared to be more flexibility in the deployment of staff in classes and the previous practice of withdrawing a number of S1 pupils from modern languages had been changed. There was more emphasis on providing in -class support for pupils rather than extracting pupils from classes. While progress was being made, it was important that the school and staff change arrangements to create opportunities for liaison between subject teaching staff and SfL teaching and support staff.

All staff had been provided with information on pupils` prior learning and this was proving to be useful in supporting the learning needs of individual pupils. Teachers were more aware of the need to provide work according to pupils` ability and there was some evidence of increasing opportunities for group work or working in pairs. Almost all teachers were sharing learning intentions with their pupils and there were examples of good practice. However, more work was required in this area to ensure that learning intentions were appropriate and meaningful for pupils. Strategies such as the trial run at S2, S4 and S5 for course choice had resulted in more choices for pupils. Teacher learning communities, where staff meet in groups to discuss and improve their professional practice, had been established with some examples of peer observation and support. However, while these were developing well and were having a positive impact on practice, they were still at an early stage. The SLT were working with a number of departments to improve pupil examination performance, particularly at higher grade.

Outcomes and impact

Observations by SLT have shown that learning intentions and success criteria are being routinely used in lessons.

Pupils at S1/S2 indicated that many lessons were routine, dull and lacked challenge. There were few opportunities for group work and little use made of ICT in lessons. Senior pupils thought that the quality of learning and teaching had improved with more group work. These

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pupils thought that there was more discussion and better questioning by teachers, but this was variable across subject departments.

Future Action

The school will:

- Work with staff to develop a common understanding of differentiation and active learning.
- Engage in further work to ensure greater consistency in the quality of learning intentions and success criteria.
- Continue to review course choice arrangements and the opportunities available to meet pupils` needs.
- Continue to address the lack of challenge for more able pupils within the S1/2 curriculum.
- Continue to encourage and develop effective ways of improving the overall quality of learning and teaching, for example, by increasing the number of staff involved in the Tapestry Project.
- Seek the involvement of the Authority`s Learning and Teaching Officers to improve practice across the school.
- Continue to work to improve attainment, particularly at higher grade.

3. Develop the skills and confidence of young people and staff to help them take a stronger role in school improvement.

Action to Date

A significant number of working groups had been established to take forward the school`s identified priorities. These groups included key areas such as teaching and learning, communication, Health, Citizenship, interdisciplinary learning, staff consultation, celebrating achievement, literacy and numeracy. Staff had been invited to participate on a voluntary basis and ownership lay with the group. The uptake by staff was very encouraging, though not all staff were involved. Arrangements were being made to ensure that the Literacy and Numeracy groups had representation from all curricular areas. A number of working groups also had pupil representation, for example the Health, celebrating achievement and fund raising groups. A small number of staff reported that their morale was low, however, the majority of the teaching staff had risen to the challenge of addressing the agenda left by HMIE. Support staff indicated that they did not feel valued nor were they knowledgeable about the school improvement plan or the school`s arrangements for self- evaluation. However, support staff were represented on the staff consultative group. The format for pupil council meetings had been changed and there was now a more formal agenda. There had been discussion about teaching and learning when pupils had been asked their opinions on aspects of learning and teaching. Their views had been taken into account when revising the school`s homework policy. Principal teachers and subject teachers were becoming more aware of the need to take account of pupils` views when reviewing lessons and courses for the following year. Good arrangements were in place to recognise and celebrate young people`s achievements. House assemblies were regularly held for pupils across S1- S6 and all school staff were allocated to a House. Senior pupils played an active part in these assemblies and pupils` achievements were being recorded.

Outcomes and Impact

Pupils reported that most staff were trying to take account of pupils` views and that things had changed since the inspection, however some pupils, for example, at S1/2 indicated that they were rarely asked questions about how lessons had gone. The more participative format for staff meetings was proving successful in encouraging a more consultative and inclusive

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approach. However, more needs to be done, for example, to ensure that support staff are more fully involved.

Future Action

The school will:

- Address the perception from some staff that e-mails are not always acknowledged.
- Continue with the participative format of staff meetings but ensure that minutes and decisions are communicated timeously thereafter.
- Develop more effective mechanisms for Pupil Council members to canvass pupils' views.
- Increase the frequency of pupil council meetings
- Address the need to involve support staff more fully in school improvement and in the life of the school more generally.

4. Develop partnership working to broaden young people's learning experiences and opportunities to achieve.

Action to Date

The school had a wide range of business partnerships and many subject departments had worthwhile links with local businesses. In response to comments and suggestions from business partners, a good start had been made in reviewing the school's Industry Awareness Day which had been in place for a number of years. A decision had been taken to amalgamate the school's enterprise group and industry awareness group to provide greater coherence in progressing the agenda set by the Determined to Succeed (DtS) initiative. These developments were being supported by funding for DtS provided by the Authority. Training in engaging with businesses had been provided for all principal teachers and this had been well received. Follow up training with local employer involvement was being planned as a next step. These initiatives were seen as providing a good basis for developing practical and applied learning opportunities for pupils. Improved liaison had been established with Moray College with one member of SLT taking responsibility for this role. Pupils had been made aware of the school's expectations for the performance of those undertaking College courses, and arrangements were in hand for a DHT to visit Moray College to assess the progress of pupils. A review of courses on offer at Intermediate 1 and 2 had been completed in terms of their appropriateness for pupils. The review also included opportunities to enhance the senior curriculum, for example, through offering Higher and Intermediate 2 Psychology. As a result of this closer liaison a Skills for Work Course at Access 3 was dropped in favour of Intermediate 1 Practical Craft Skills in terms of better meeting pupils' needs. The school was working to develop the wider aspects of the curriculum. Skill Force was working effectively with pupils at S3 and S4 and Community Learning and Development were planning to deliver their Participate Course next session to S5 and S6. Staff in school were preparing to deliver a Sports Leadership Award in conjunction with Active Schools staff. Good arrangements were in place to support delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh Award and a large and increasing number of pupils were involved in this.

Outcomes and Impact

Improvements had been made particularly as a result of members of the SLT taking direct responsibility for working with identified partners. However, more work was required to capture the impact of partnership on young people, including those partners who support young people as part of multi-agency working.

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Future Action

The school will:

- Continue to maintain an overview of the school's partners and record the contribution of each one.
- Review existing and potential partnerships with a view to enhancing learning opportunities for young people.

Conclusion

The education authority was satisfied that the school was taking appropriate steps to address the main points for action contained in the HMIE report. There was clear evidence of progress being made in terms of improvements which were impacting on pupils' experiences. However, it was important that progress was maintained so that the main points for action were fully addressed.