



PROGRESS ON THE MAIN POINTS FOR ACTION

Braes High School was inspected in June 2009 as part of a national sample of secondary education. The school received a very positive report with a number of key strengths identified.

These were:

- A strongly improving school due to the hard work of staff under the effective leadership of the senior managers
- Young people's commitment to developing a positive school ethos
- The school's progress in developing leadership opportunities for young people
- Partnership working with a range of external agencies to support young people's learning
- Support from specialist staff for particular learning needs

Her Majesty's Inspectors identified three areas for improvement which the school and the authority have addressed.

Falkirk Council Education Services were asked to evaluate the progress made by the school in taking forward the recommendations and inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Since the publication of the report in August 2009, good progress has been made towards the areas for improvement in the HMIe report. The headteacher, Helen McCulloch, and her staff are firmly committed to an agenda of continuous improvement and a culture of self-evaluation and reflection.

Progress has been verified through classroom observations, meetings with the headteacher and the

senior management team, staff and pupils, and through scrutiny of the school's documentation.

Progress in meeting the recommendations has been monitored and supported by the Quality Improvement Team.

Progress against the three areas for improvement is detailed below.

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 1

Continue to improve attainment

Staff analyse STACS data and evaluate the effectiveness of delivering courses, learning and teaching methodologies and pupil performance as a result. Where issues are identified measures are put in place to improve practice.

The school has continued to offer new courses which have been developed to meet the needs of its pupils. These have included Duke of Edinburgh, CSLA, Rural Skills, Higher Dance, Cake Decorating and Personal Finance. Staff focus on providing appropriate support, pace and challenge to enable all pupils to reach their full potential.

In September 2009, the school transferred to a new management information system and continues to develop and incorporate its systems for tracking, monitoring and target setting pupils' progress. It is recognised that this is still work in progress.

The use of CAT data in S1 and S3 will enable staff to track and set targets for pupils, as well as develop individual and class profiles and give a greater understanding of learning styles. This data highlights 'gifted' pupils so that senior staff can track and monitor their progress.

Senior pupils are involved in the process of target setting throughout the session where staff discuss 'working' and 'aspirational' grades. The school has reviewed the timings of parents' evenings and reports to strengthen parental partnership in supporting pupils.

For three years the school has been developing its S4 mentoring programme in response to staff and pupil evaluations. Pupils who were identified as being on the cusp of achieving 5+ awards at SCQF levels 3, 4 or 5 have one to one meetings with senior staff. Pupils select the teacher they wish to have as their mentor. This was very successful even where the mentor was not the expert for the focused subject. Over this session 31 pupils were matched with their selected mentor. The school plans to extend its mentoring programme to S5 and S6 pupils.

Additional study skills have been built into the S4 mentoring programme in the lead up to the SQA examination diet. Staff and pupil evaluations were very positive.

The school offers a successful supported study programme for pupils in senior year groups which is linked into its tracking and monitoring systems. Identified pupils are highlighted and encouraged to attend.

A two day Easter school was held for all senior pupils with many departments contributing. Pupils who would particularly benefit from attending were identified and invited to attend specific sessions.

By the end of S4 the percentage of pupils achieving SCQF level 3 in English and Maths rose from 90% to 92%.

By the end of S4 the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ awards at SCQF level 3 or better rose from 87% to 88%. The percentage of pupils achieving 5+ awards at SCQF level 4 or better dipped slightly from 76% to 75%.

The percentage of pupils achieving 5+ awards at SCQF level 5 or better dipped slightly from 37% to 36%.

By the end of S5 the percentage of pupils achieving 1+ award and 3+ awards at SCQF level 6 or better remained the same at 41% and 24% respectively. The percentage of pupils achieving 5+ awards at SCQF level 6 or better dipped slightly from 10% to 8%.

By the end of S6 the percentage of pupils achieving 3+ awards at SCQF level 6 rose from 28% to 33%. The percentage of pupils achieving 5+ awards at SCQF level 6 rose considerably from 14% to 23%. The percentage of pupils achieving 1+ award at SCQF level 7 or better increased significantly from 8% to 19%.

Good progress has been made towards meeting this area for improvement.

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 2

Further improve the impact of self evaluation on learning and teaching

The school's 'Lead Teachers' have been instrumental in promoting active learning methodologies over the last three years. They developed and facilitated staff training sessions for 80 staff members in methodologies to improve the motivation and engagement of pupils in learning.

The consistent use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies has been a key focus for the school over the past few years to ensure that practices were embedded. This was advanced further last session with the involvement of staff in the authority's joint partnership with Tapestry in developing Teacher Learning Communities (TLC) to develop Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies.

The TLC approach enables staff to reflect on and evaluate their own practice using AfL techniques to

inform lesson planning which best suits pupils' needs as individuals. It also encourages staff to have critical conversations about the impact of the techniques and strategies on pupils' learning. Staff are encouraged to observe each other and use the observations as the basis for discussing learning and teaching at the TLC meetings.

Two thirds of the staff are now involved with TLCs which has led to a far more consistent approach to learning and teaching. The school plans to adopt the TLC model within departmental and faculty meetings to ensure all staff have the opportunity to self reflect on their methodologies and approaches and share good practice.

AfL information has been incorporated into pupil planners. There is an expectation from pupils that lessons will contain clear learning outcomes and success criteria and that they will be actively engaged in the learning process.

Most departments now ask pupils to evaluate their own progress and in some departments pupils are involved in evaluating the teacher's teaching approaches and methodologies.

The school has clear and robust quality assurance procedures for monitoring learning and teaching. Part of the process involving classroom observation has been reviewed to encourage and develop a more self reflective ethos. A new pro-forma for classroom observations was devised which requires the teacher to evaluate their observed lesson prior to discussion with management. This ensures that the discussions are led by the practitioner whilst the line manager 'coaches' through a series of questions to promote reflection on learning and teaching.

Very good progress has been made towards meeting this area for improvement.



**FURTHER
INFORMATION**

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 3

Meet the learning needs of all young people consistently well across the curriculum

The establishment of Teacher Learning Communities involving 60% of the staff is encouraging the further development of pace, challenge and differentiation within the classroom. Support for Learning staff advise on how materials and resources can be differentiated. Robust STACS analysis and monitoring by management ensure pupils are presented with materials and courses which are appropriate to their needs.

The P7 transition programme is extensive and this session has included cross sector working with English, Maths and Science being the curricular focus. The work undertaken involved audits, team teaching and curriculum support. The impact led to a review of S1 courses and an improved understanding of primary and secondary methodologies. The P7 'transfer of information' includes broad attainment levels in English, Maths and IT as well as pastoral information and identification of any pupils with special aptitudes. Pastoral and Support for Learning staff make a number of visits to associated primary schools to ensure learning needs are identified and met within S1.

High achievers are fast tracked in curricular areas with early presentation in English at S3 in Standard Grade, S4 for Highers and S5 for Advanced Highers.

Pastoral Support is a key strength of the school with Restorative principles and approaches underpinning the quality of relationships between staff and pupils. The school has 11 members of staff trained as 'Guidance Volunteers' who work closely with Pastoral Heads to help meet pupils' needs.

Form teacher's duties were mutually agreed and include being actively involved with reporting to parents. S1-3 Form Teachers are supported by S6 'Form Assistants' who are involved with the school's positive behaviour system and buddy younger pupils.

Every pupil in the school is well known by at least one member of staff.

There are systems in place to support vulnerable pupils and pupils with barriers to their learning.

The school allocates 'key teachers' from Support for Learning who meet daily with the pupils to discuss any issues and liaise with parents/carers on a regular basis. The role is extended to ensure that any appropriate support required is sought whether it is in the class, for exams, work experience or working with other agencies. Pupils who require additional support value the input from their key teacher who ensures vulnerable pupils are tracked and supported to meet their needs and maximise their potential.

To meet the learning needs of some pupils in S1-4, the school offers an alternative curriculum for English and/or Maths with pupils working in a smaller group setting. For some this has also been offered in Social Subject or Art classes. This has proved to be very successful in developing pupils' confidence and some have been able to continue their learning in larger classes.

A very successful 'Transition Course' for S4 pupils has been run in partnership initially with the Employment and Training Unit but has now developed further and extended to other external providers to ensure pupils' needs are met. The impact of the course included improved destinations for the pupils; improved attendance; improved behaviour and engagement with education. The success was recognised by Fiona

Hyslop, former Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, who visited the school to meet with pupils and parents. The school has shared its experiences at conferences and with SQA.

The school recognises that meeting learning needs is not consistently high across all areas of the curriculum. However, with the implementation and development of Curriculum for Excellence it will further extend opportunities for cross curricular learning and build on the progress made in developing literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in the junior school.

Pupils enjoy the large variety of extra curricular activities available to them at lunch times and after school. They appreciate the extent to which all staff give of their time to support them in their studies as well as in their welfare. They are encouraged to share their successes and the school systematically records and celebrates this. Perhaps the enjoyment of their school experience can best be summed up by one S6 pupil who 'wished there was an S7!'

Good progress has been made towards meeting this area for improvement.

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For further information on this report or the Council's strategy for Raising Achievement please contact the Headteacher or

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Further copies of this report and the original HMIE report are available from the school or on the HMIE website at www.hmie.gov.uk

Falkirk Council Education Services are committed to open communication that achieves shared understanding and helps overcome barriers. This leaflet can be made available in other languages, in Braille, large print or on audio tape. Please contact 01324 506600 for further information.



LEARNING TO ACHIEVE
A Strategy for Raising Achievement

Progress Report on the HMIE
Areas for Improvement



**Braes High
School**
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