

# FORRESTER HIGH SCHOOL

Follow through report on the HMIE inspection

MARCH 2011

## 1 THE INSPECTION

HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) published a report on the quality of education in Forrester High School in May 2009. Subsequently the school with support from the education authority amended the school improvement plan to take account of the findings of the inspection.

An education authority team recently visited the school to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to develop the quality of its education including the areas identified for improvement and produced a progress report for parents.

This report tells you about the quality of education provided by the school since the original inspection. It also comments on the progress made in the agreed areas for improvement.

The main areas of focus are on learning and achievement, meeting the learning needs of the pupils and leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

## 2 IMPROVEMENTS IN THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

### 2.1 Learning and achievement

Learners have continued to progress well in their learning. There has been an overall improvement in the number of young people achieving the appropriate levels in reading, writing

and mathematics by the end of S2. Almost all pupils have continued to gain national qualifications by the end of S3. Standard Grade and National Qualification results have been sustained in S4 and there has been an increase in the attainment of the pupils in S5. The school's performance at this stage now compares very well with schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds.

The school has continued to make good progress in developing its systematic and accessible monitoring and tracking system for attainment. Plans are in place to transfer this to an improved electronic system at the start of next session. Young people were generally clear about the use and purpose of their targets and there were increasing opportunities for these to be negotiated in a meaningful way at more frequent intervals. The school has effectively used this information to introduce intervention strategies, such as 'mentoring periods' to ensure individual learners were supported to achieve their academic potential. Learners spoke very positively of the way staff provided opportunities for extra support when they were having difficulties.

All learners with additional support needs were involved in developing and reviewing their educational plans and were clear about their targets for learning.

Learners were very positive about the wide range of opportunities available which allowed them to take part in activities which promote wider achievement. The school actively encouraged participation in these opportunities and continues to extend the scope of these activities to develop the variety of talents and skills of their young people. Learners clearly described how the school celebrated their achievements although the school recognises that it needs to consider how to track this more systematically.

The school has made a good start to developing its new curriculum in line with both national and local developments. All S1 courses have undergone changes designed to reflect national guidance and make them more stimulating, challenging, relevant and enjoyable. Teachers were increasingly engaged in exploring a number of interdisciplinary learning opportunities and the school continues to build on the success of the 'Heroes and Villains Project'.

The school has also made a good start to planning its new curricular structure in line with the recent national guidelines and contemporary requirements. There had been a high level of consultation with staff and parents throughout this process with a particular emphasis on the provision of physical education (PE) and religious and moral education (RME). The improved sports facilities of the new school and increased flexibility of choice has increased the uptake of PE although this was still less than two hours for some pupils in the senior school.

The school is currently considering the provision of RME and religious observance with a view to integrating the requirements into the new curricular structure.

## **2.2 Meeting pupils' learning needs**

The relationship between staff and learners is one of mutual respect. Almost all learners were motivated and engaged in the learning process and contribute well in lessons. Learners enjoyed the increased opportunities to discuss with their peers and learn together which was now a feature in most classrooms. They worked confidently both individually and in groups and were increasingly involved in discussions about the purpose of their learning and what they need to do to improve. Lessons were well planned with a range of tasks and activities to support learning. Teachers have increased the range and quality of teaching and learning strategies and these are being applied more consistently across the school. The improved facilities of the new school and targeted training of staff has resulted in a more effective use of information and communication technology across the school.

The practice of sharing classroom experience is now clearly recognised by teachers in the school as a mechanism for improving learning across the school. Staff spoke positively of the usefulness of this activity and an increasing number are involved in sharing classroom experience in groups. This activity was complementary to the already established classroom observation

by senior managers. The school senior managers have effectively supported this development and were focused on the need to maximise the impact of this activity.

The school was very good at identifying barriers to learning and devising strategies to overcome them. Regular and frequent meetings involving key staff and partners ensured that there was a coherent understanding of learners' needs and the support strategies which were put in place. Learners with additional support needs were very well supported by the support for learning and the support for pupils staff and they effectively communicated the needs of these learners to all staff. Educational plans provided clear guidance to staff on how to support specific young people's learning.

The school has liaised successfully with local colleges, neighbouring schools and a variety of agencies, to increase the range of courses and opportunities available to its young people. This provision includes the extension of national qualifications at all levels, the introduction of targeted college courses and the provision of curricular programmes such as the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) initiative.

### **2.3 Leadership and direction**


The headteacher and his senior managers continued to provide a very

clear direction for the school. They worked effectively as a team and were committed to meeting the needs of their learners as well as creating a culture of continuous improvement. They had worked closely with staff, pupils and parents to ensure a very positive working atmosphere in the new school.

There was a growing culture of developing leadership capacity at all levels. The school's senior managers had successfully engaged with the principal teachers to increase their ownership of the improvement priorities and the self-evaluation of the work of the school. This has had a significant impact on the consistency of the learners' experiences across the school.

Staff felt able and confident to show initiative and take on lead roles within and beyond the classroom. They had contributed well to the progress with the improvement plan priorities and the implementation of aspects of the new curriculum. Particular staff have taken the lead in the development of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across the school. Other staff were involved in supporting a number of in-school activities designed to share and improve teaching practice across the school.

Self-evaluation has become an integral part of the school's improvement procedures. The school has a number



of examples of effective self-evaluation strategies in place both at school and departmental levels. Improved communication combined with an improved sense of responsibility and accountability throughout the school was having a significant impact on the quality of the process.

The school has continued to develop leadership opportunities for its young people. The pupil council has been restructured and new procedures put in place. This has created a forum which has allowed pupils to contribute to school improvements more effectively.

### **3 CONCLUSION**

With support from the education authority, Forrester High School continues to provide a very good standard of education for its pupils. The school has progressed well since the inspection and has made the necessary improvements in terms of the inspection findings. The current improvement plan has had a very positive impact on the work of the school. The leadership and teamwork in the school provides a very good basis for continued improvement. The education authority will publish no further reports in connection with the 2009 HMIE inspection.

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