

LEITH ACADEMY

Follow through report on the HMIE inspection

DECEMBER 2010

1 THE INSPECTION

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the quality of education in Leith Academy in May 2008 and the school amended the school improvement plan to take into account the findings. Two follow-through HMIE inspections took place, with reports published in May 2009 and March 2010 respectively, to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve.

An education authority team recently visited Leith Academy to evaluate the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its education, including in the areas identified by HMIE. This progress report for parents has been produced as a result. It tells you about the quality of education provided by the school since the original inspection.

2 IMPROVEMENTS IN THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

2.1 Learning and achievement

In 2010, S1 learners achieved in line with or better than national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Overall, S2 pupils performed less well than those in other similar schools nationally. In S3 and S4, results improved in a number of key attainment measures at Standard grade (SG) and National Qualifications

(NQ) levels, including in English and mathematics. Performance in all key measures by the end of S6 was positive.

A number of strategies had been put in place that had ensured improvements for learners, including an extensive annual programme of faculty reviews carried out by the senior management team. The school had very good arrangements to systematically track and monitor the attainment and progress of all learners from S1 to S6. This had had a positive impact on how most young people viewed their progress and had raised their aspirations. Most were clear about their targets and what to do to improve. Learners spoke positively about the impact of mentoring. They and their teachers valued the increased opportunities for talking about learning and progress. Parents commented positively about the regular reports they received which allowed them to discuss progress from the earliest stages.

Teachers used a wide range of approaches to make learning more stimulating. Most young people were engaged in their learning. They enjoyed learning together in discussions and collaborative work with their peers. In almost all lessons, teachers shared learning intentions, built on prior knowledge and ended with a plenary. Instructions and explanations were clear.

An increasing number of departments made effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) such as interactive whiteboards and Glow sites to enhance learning and teaching. The home learning programme encouraged young people to take more responsibility for their learning. Well-planned activities such as field trips and talks from outside speakers extended learners' experiences.

Young people were very positive about opportunities for wider achievement. Commendably, an increasing number of them had gained notable successes in sport, music and theatre. Wider achievements were increasingly recognised and celebrated across the school. This had improved the ethos of achievement in the school.

The restructuring of pupil support and tutor groups into a vertical system had increased young people's sense of the school as a community. They spoke positively about the standards now expected and the pride they had in the school. Parents commented positively on the strength of the school's community links.

A good start had been made to developing the S1–S3 curriculum in line with national expectations. All S1 courses had been changed to reflect *Curriculum for Excellence* learning experiences and outcomes. S1 pupils particularly enjoyed the interdisciplinary learning experiences built into courses.

2.2 Meeting pupils' learning needs

At all stages the pace of learning was appropriate. Teachers planned tasks and activities that met the needs of most learners. In the most effective lessons, these involved problem-solving, challenged thinking and used real and relevant contexts for learning.

Class teachers were made aware of pupils' additional support needs through the electronic support bulletin. An extensive programme of continuous professional development sessions on meeting differing learning needs had been put in place.

The school had well-established links with a wide range of partners. Close working with agencies such as the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service, the education welfare officer and the school-based youth worker helped ensure that effective support was provided for young people with a range of additional needs.

Two new posts, the More Choices More Chances (MCMC) co-ordinator for pupils at risk of not progressing to further or higher education, training or work and the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) manager, had recently been created. These, together with the restructuring of the Pupil Support Team, had strengthened the school's co-ordinated approach to meeting needs.

Staff spoke positively about the move to a vertical pupil support structure, including the increased opportunities for dialogue with

young people about their learning and progress.

The curriculum was being very effectively developed with external partners. Care had been taken to ensure that all young people were able to choose courses that better met their individual needs and aspirations and provided more coherent learning experiences. This included the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) course, the Prince's Trust xl programme and a college transition programme. The school also offered a range of courses that ensured young people were equipped with skills for work. Senior pupils spoke very positively about these opportunities.

2.3 Leadership and direction

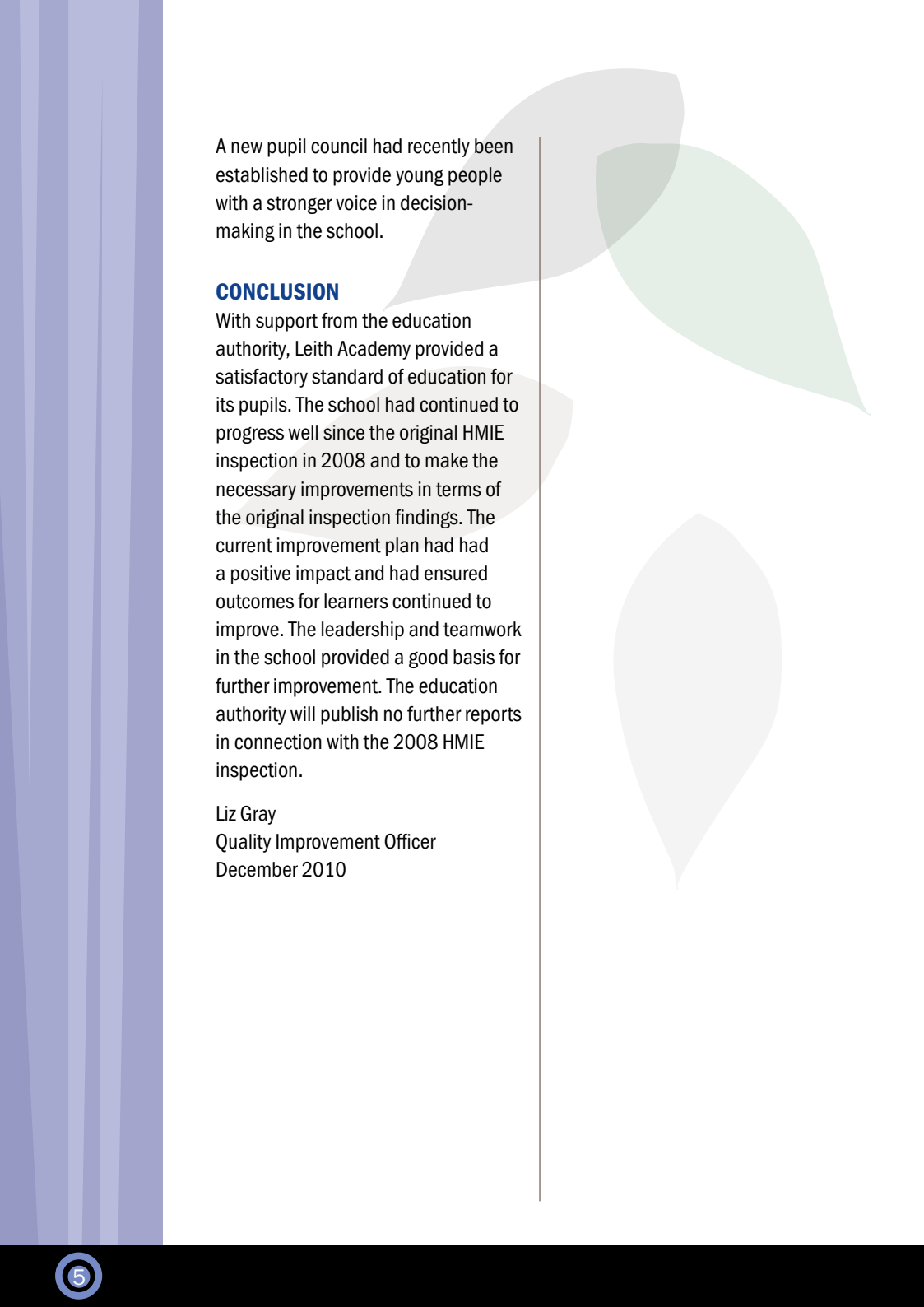
The headteacher had continued to give clear direction for improving the school and was well supported by the senior management team. He had established positive working relationships with pupils, parents and staff. Processes to identify whole school and departmental priorities involving all staff were well established and focused on improving outcomes for learners.

Learning was the main priority in improvement plans and all staff had benefited from high quality continuous professional development opportunities to support them to take this forward.

Principal teachers had continued to develop their leadership of learning and had a key role in school improvement. Each department had two whole school priorities in their improvement plan as well as priorities resulting from their own audit processes. This had had a notable impact on the consistency of the learners' experiences across the school. Sharing classroom experience was embedded and included peer observation.

Staff were committed to the school. Almost all had contributed to curriculum development, improvements to learning and teaching and to evaluating the impact of the improvement plan. Staff had taken the lead in literacy across learning and in work with associated primaries. Many supported the extensive range of out-of-school activities for young people.

Young people were gaining new leadership skills and increased confidence from a range of opportunities. Increasingly, they were taking on responsibilities as prefects, buddies to younger peers or organisers of charity fundraising events. Commendably, a group of seniors had made a significant contribution to the promotion of fitness, health and well-being in the school community through sports coaching while work led by younger pupils had resulted in improvements to the school's World War 2 memorial.



A new pupil council had recently been established to provide young people with a stronger voice in decision-making in the school.

CONCLUSION

With support from the education authority, Leith Academy provided a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The school had continued to progress well since the original HMIE inspection in 2008 and to make the necessary improvements in terms of the original inspection findings. The current improvement plan had had a positive impact and had ensured outcomes for learners continued to improve. The leadership and teamwork in the school provided a good basis for further improvement. The education authority will publish no further reports in connection with the 2008 HMIE inspection.

Liz Gray
Quality Improvement Officer
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