

# THE ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL

Follow through report on the HMIE inspection

JUNE 2010

## 1 THE INSPECTION

HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) published a report on the quality of education in The Royal High School in September 2007. Subsequently, the school, with support from the education authority, amended the school improvement plan to take account of the recommendations of the inspection. A team of officers from the education authority 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 comments on the quality of education provided by the school since the original inspection. It also describes 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

Pupils in S1 and S2 have continued to improve their attainment levels in reading, writing and particularly so in mathematics. Standard Grade results have also continued to be very good,

with pupil attainment in S5 being strong. The school's performance in national assessments has been consistently above national averages.

The school has made good progress in developing a systematic and accessible monitoring and tracking system for attainment in the senior school. Most senior pupils are clear about the use and purpose of their targets. There are increasing opportunities for the pupils to negotiate these in a meaningful way and at more frequent intervals. The school has used this information to effectively introduce intervention strategies to ensure individual pupils are appropriately supported to achieve their academic potential.

Target setting for the lower school is at an early stage of development. Good practice is evident in some curricular areas where pupils negotiate meaningful targets related to the improvement of their learning.

All pupils with additional support needs are involved in developing and reviewing their additional support plans and ensuring that they are clear about their targets for learning.

The school has recognised that there is now a need for a more coherent overview of target setting to promote consistency of practice and to ensure its effective use across all areas of the school.

The school actively encourages the development of talents and skills in young people by supporting and providing an extensive range of opportunities in partnership with staff, parents, pupils and other contributors. Pupils are positive about the wide range of opportunities available which allow them to take part in activities which promote wider achievement. Pupils speak positively of the way staff provide opportunities for extra support when they were having difficulties.

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

The relationship between staff and pupils is one of mutual respect. Most pupils are motivated and engaged in the teaching process. Learners contribute well to lessons. They enjoy learning together, for example in discussion with peers. They work confidently both individually and on group tasks. Lessons are well planned, highly organised, with good reference to prior learning. Teachers are aware of teaching and learning strategies but these strategies now require to be applied consistently across the school. Information communication technology is being used in most lessons to support learning.

The practice of sharing classroom experience is now recognised by most teachers in the school as a mechanism for improving learning across the school and staff speak positively of the usefulness of this activity. The clarity of purpose however, requires to be further defined and the practice requires to become consistent across the school.

Pupils comment that in departments where targets are being set it gives a focus for their work and provide advice on the next steps in their learning. Pupils want staff to engage more frequently in this activity. Report cards provide good information on strengths of pupils, but could be used to provide more detail for pupils on their next steps for learning.

The school is very good at identifying barriers to learning and devising strategies to overcome them. Pupils with additional needs are very well supported by the support for learning staff and they effectively communicate to all staff the needs of these pupils. Additional support plans provide clear guidance to staff on how to support learning. Commendably, the school has recently introduced shadowing pupils in order to ensure that pupils with additional needs are being supported appropriately across the school.

The school has continued to offer an increasing range of courses to address the needs of pupils. Other curricular programmes such as The S4 Royal High Individuals Seeking Employment (RISE), and the Moving on have helped meet the needs of more pupils.

## **2.3 Leadership and direction**

Commendably, the newly appointed headteacher has made a very quick impact on the school. She has managed to lead the school with dedication and clarity of direction. Her high level organisation skills

have ensured the day to day business of the school is being managed very effectively. She is supported by a team of depute headteachers who demonstrate teamwork, commitment and the ability to support continuous improvement. Collectively they have developed a positive atmosphere in the school.

Staff are positive about the direction of leadership and the sense of purpose. The improved teamwork at Senior Leadership Team (SLT) level has meant a more consistent message being delivered to staff and pupils in the school. The SLT now needs to build on improvements made in this area and ensure the results of consultation are communicated effectively to all stakeholders.

There is a growing culture of developing leadership capacity at all levels. Leaders provide opportunities for some staff to take leadership roles. Staff feel able and confident to show initiative and take on lead roles within and beyond the classroom. All staff contribute well to a wide range of working groups which had focused on the improvement plan priorities and the implementation of aspects of 'Curriculum for Excellence'.

Self-evaluation is progressing well. The school has a number of examples of effective self-evaluation strategies in place, including departmental

analysis, class visits, and views from pupils, parents and staff on a number of areas. To have a more decisive impact on the school these approaches need to be applied with greater consistency and rigour particularly in gathering pupils' views about learning in order that pupils feel they are contributors to the school improvement process.

Communication with parents has been improved by the use of frequent news letters and text messaging, which regularly update parents on school business and successes.

### **3 CONCLUSION**

With support from the education authority, The Royal High School continues to provide a very good standard of education for its pupils. The school had made progress since the HMIE inspection in terms of the improvements highlighted in the inspection findings. The current improvement plan and the headteacher's leadership have impacted positively on the work of the school. The education authority will make no further reports in connection with this inspection.

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