

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 15 FEBRUARY 2012
REPORT ON: HMle INSPECTION OF ST PAUL'S RC ACADEMY
REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
REPORT NO: 70-2012

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to report on the findings of the HMle Inspection of St Paul's RC Academy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- i) notes the contents of this report; and
- ii) instructs the Director of Education to monitor progress towards meeting the areas for improvement contained in the report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 St Paul's RC Academy was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMle) in September 2011. They published a report on their findings on 1 November 2011. At the time of the inspection the roll was 969.

4.2 HMIE identified the following key strengths of the school:

- the welcoming atmosphere and caring ethos;
- the commitment of staff to improve the school;
- the support provided for young people entering the school from P7; and
- the quality of accommodation and facilities.

4.3 The following areas for improvement were agreed with the school and education authority:

- raise expectations and improve the consistency of young people's learning experiences and achievements;
- improve arrangements to meet the learning needs of young people, including those requiring additional support;
- improve the curriculum to meet the needs and entitlements of all young people; and
- develop consistent and rigorous approaches to self-evaluation.

4.4 Quality Indicators

4.4.1 HMIE reports use a six-point scale for reporting performance:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

4.4.2 The following quality indicators from "How Good Is Our School 3" (HGIOS 3) were evaluated:

Quality Indicator	
Improvements in performance	satisfactory
Learners' experiences	satisfactory
Meeting learning needs	weak
The curriculum	weak
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

4.5 St Paul's RC Academy formed part of an authority extended review in March 2010. As part of the review a number of strengths were commented on including the welcoming and caring atmosphere of the school and the leadership and commitment of the Head Teacher. In addition to this the role of the Guidance mentors and the emerging role of the staff working groups in school improvement were commented on favourably. The final report, although highlighting areas of good practice, identified a number of action points. These included improving the consistency of learning teaching through the extension of active learning and greater emphasis on differentiation. The extended review report also recommended reviewing and extend the role of Support for Learning teachers to maximise the impact for learners and implementing more consistently approaches to promoting positive behaviour. Although some of these actions points had been overtaken before this HMIE visit, the main points for action identified by HMIE are still broadly in line with the findings of the extended review.

4.6 The school, supported by the authority progressed the action plan created after the extended review, but the pace of the implementation and the impact was affected by a number of key staffing issues in the SMT. The Head Teacher at the time of the extended review left post in December of 2010 and acting arrangements have been in place in the school until August 2011 when the current Head Teacher took up post. In March 2011 one of Depute Head Teachers in St Paul's RC Academy left the school due to internal promotion and this vacancy was filled by a short term acting arrangement in the school. These substantial changes in senior staffing have caused delays in implementing all of the changes recommended as part of the authority extended review. These management difficulties, along with a considerable amount of staff turnover due to the merger, are acknowledged by HMIE in the report findings.

4.7 The school prior to, during and after the inspection has been supported by the authority through the QIO team and are currently finalising an action plan to respond to the main recommendations. This action plan will form the basis for the next school improvement plan which is scheduled to commence in June 2012. HMIE recognised the commitment of the school staff and management to take forward the recommendations and particularly highlighted the very positive start made by the newly appointed Head Teacher.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has been screened for any implications in respect of sustainability, strategic environment assessment, anti-poverty and equality impact assessment and risk management.

5.2 There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the school's Head Teacher.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

Michael Wood
Director of Education

PC/MM

23 November 2011

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1 November 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

St Paul's RC Academy

Dundee City Council

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I visited and inspected your child's school. Throughout our visit we talked to many parents and young people and we worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well young people were learning and achieving and how well the school supported young people to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's work including: support for young people and the contribution made by the school's partners; progress being made towards Curriculum for Excellence; quality and consistency of learning and teaching; and the ethos and levels of expectation of staff and young people. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school was at improving children's education. I would now like to tell you what we found.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

The majority of young people learn and achieve well. However, many young people, particularly at S1 to S4, are capable of achieving more.

Most young people feel safe and well cared for. They enjoy their learning, benefiting from the attractive learning environment. In most lessons, young people listen attentively and concentrate well on their work. They respond well to being given opportunities to work together in groups and to take responsibility for their learning. In some lessons, activities are too teacher-led and young people are too passive in their learning. Young people are beginning to develop skills in evaluating their own work and in setting themselves targets for their learning. This is well done in a few classes but needs to be more consistent overall. Across the school, children are learning about global citizenship as a result of the strong links developed with a village in southern India. These links successfully encourage young people to develop Catholic values and contribute positively to the school's ethos. In some subjects, homework makes a strong contribution to young people's learning. This is too variable, however, and staff do not all share the same high expectations for young people. Overall, the quality of young people's learning experiences is too inconsistent across the school.

Young people achieve well through taking part in various activities, including a wide range of out-of-hours clubs. At S5 and S6, young people develop their own skills by helping younger learners and other members of the community. Several take on responsibility well across the school, for example, as prefects. The school does not collect reliable information on young people's progress and attainment during S1 and S2. Staff recognise that they should make better use of available assessment data. By the end of S4, young people's attainment is, overall, well below national averages and poorer than in schools serving young people with similar needs and backgrounds. However, in the past three years, attainment has shown promising signs of improvement. By the end of S6, attainment remains below national averages but is generally in line or better than in schools serving young people with similar needs and backgrounds. The school is working very well to improve the number of young people who go on to further and higher education, employment or training.

How well does the school support young people to develop and learn?

There is considerable scope to improve how well the school meets the learning needs of all young people, including those who require additional support.

In around half of the lessons we observed, tasks and activities were well-matched to meet the needs of most learners. In a significant number of lessons, activities were too easy, particularly for higher-achieving pupils. Teachers need to take more account of young people's individual needs and achievements and encourage all young people to have high expectations. Staff make very effective use of digital examination papers for young people who require additional support. Across the school, teachers could make better use of information and communications technology to motivate and support young people in their learning. Support for learning staff provide helpful individual support in some classes but do not share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Important improvement priorities identified by the school and education authority have not been fully addressed. As a result, teachers are not sufficiently aware of how best to support young people in their learning. Arrangements for young people with Additional Support Plans need to be improved and shared more effectively with relevant teachers. Young people are well supported in moving from P7 into S1.

The curriculum, overall, provides most young people with a broad range of subjects and opportunities. Partner agencies, including Dundee College, and initiatives such as "Xplore" and "Kick It, Kick Off", make a positive contribution to the curriculum. These contributions could be improved further through better joint planning and evaluation. Staff are beginning to deliver courses at S1/S2 which help young people to link their learning across different subjects. City-wide consortium arrangements help the school to provide a wider range of courses at Advanced Higher for young people at S6. Staff are at a very early stage in developing the curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence. Working groups to improve the curriculum have had variable impact and success. Across the school, staff do not yet share common approaches to developing young people's skills in literacy and numeracy. Arrangements to enhance young people's awareness of health and wellbeing need to be developed further.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The school's approaches for self-evaluation and its arrangements for planning improvements have made too little impact on improving the quality of its work.

Most staff are reflective and show a willingness to learn new skills and contribute to school improvements. In some departments, arrangements for self-evaluation and planning for improvement are very thorough. Across the school, however, the consistency of practice varies too much. Arrangements to analyse and improve young people's performance in national examinations are too variable and lack rigour. Senior managers need to develop and share higher expectations,

building on existing good practice within the school. Observations of learning have not yet improved the consistency of young people's learning experiences.

Following the school's formation as a result of amalgamation, there has been a period of considerable staff turnover and acting assignments at senior management level. The very recently appointed headteacher has made a strong start in identifying strengths and areas needing to be improved. Staff are optimistic about the school's potential for further improvement.

This inspection of your school found the following key strengths.

- The welcoming atmosphere and caring ethos.
- The commitment of staff to improve the school.
- The support provided for young people entering the school from P7.
- The quality of accommodation and facilities.

We discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Raise expectations and improve the consistency of young people's learning experiences and achievements.
- Improve arrangements to meet the learning needs of young people, including those requiring additional support.
- Improve the curriculum to meet the needs and entitlements of all young people.
- Develop consistent and rigorous approaches to self-evaluation.

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our District Inspector along with the local authority will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to evaluate aspects of provision and the progress in improving provision within eighteen months of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved. In that letter we will inform you if we are going to carry out a further inspection visit.

Alistair Brown
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/ViewEstablishment.aspx?id=12197&type=3>

Please contact us if you want to know how to get the report in a different format, for example, in a translation. You can contact us at enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us at BMCT, Education Scotland, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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