

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 17 MAY 2004
REPORT ON: BRAEVIEW ACADEMY
REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
REPORT NO: 368-2004

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report describes the background to the HMIE Inspection of Braeview Academy and outlines the steps currently being taken to address the main points for action in the HMIE report of March 2004.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- i the Education Committee approves the actions outlined in this report.
- ii the Director of Education continues to monitor and review progress on implementing the Action Plan and report back to the Education Committee.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

Nil

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

To ensure equality and opportunity for all pupils

6.0 BACKGROUND

Braeview Academy was inspected in March 1999 and received a good report. The subsequent follow-up report from HMIE in April 2001 was also good. The school was again inspected in November 2003 and the report of this inspection was published in March 2004.

Prior to the 2003 inspection by HMIE, the Education Department's quality assurance and school review processes had identified a number of areas of concern within the school related to its leadership, management and quality assurance. The Education Department was actively engaged in dialogue with the school Senior Management Team to ensure that they were aware of these concerns and to identify strategies to address them. Pursuing some of these concerns in the period between January 2001 and the November 2003 inspection was complicated by a number of factors. These included the absence of the Depute Head Teacher for six months followed by the absence of the Head Teacher for four months, the retirement of two members of the Senior Management Team, and the long term absence of three Quality Improvement Officers.

The report by HMIE identified a number of serious issues and echoed the concerns already noted by the Education Department. These included a need to improve consultation and communication within the school, and to address difficulties with staff recruitment and retention, which had contributed to a rapid downward spiral in school performance.

Following the early retiral of the Head Teacher it was agreed that, as a temporary measure, an experienced Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher should be immediately transferred to Braeview Academy prior to making a permanent appointment. These appointments were made in

December 2003. This allowed the school to quickly move to tackle the most immediate issues raised by HMIE following the inspection. As a result the school had made very considerable progress in the three months before the publication of the final HMIE Report. Details of the progress to date and proposals for further development are outlined below.

The Education Department has a well-established process for following through after HMIE Inspections. This provides support from Education Services Managers, Quality Improvement Officers and other staff to ensure that issues from the inspection are clearly identified and an appropriate Action Plan is drawn up to address each action point identified in the HMIE Report. This then provides the school with a clear development plan for the next two years. HMIE will normally return after one to two years to confirm progress on the action points from their original report. Without exception follow-up visits by HMIE to Dundee schools have been good or very good and action points have been overtaken leading to disengagement by HMIE.

The school and the Education Department are required to produce a draft Action Plan for approval by HMIE by the end of April 2004. The development of this plan has been a major task for the school and the Education Department since December. This has involved careful consideration of the issues raised in the HMIE report by the Senior Management Team, all staff and, where appropriate, pupils, parents and interested parties. The Action Plan will detail the tasks to be undertaken over the next two years and the expected improvements in school performance. Work on the Action Plan is already well advanced and it is confidently expected that the Action Plan will meet the approval of HMIE.

The Education Department carefully monitors the progress of its schools and in particular the findings of HMIE during inspections. It is clear that, while the situation at Braeview Academy raised a number of concerns, this was not typical of recent inspections of Dundee secondary schools, which have in general been very positive.

The department, however, is reviewing and strengthening its current school review and quality assurance processes, with a view to challenging schools positively to demonstrate that they are taking appropriate steps to improve pupil achievement. The department will complete the review, and in due course bring a report to Education Committee.

7.0 PROGRESS TO DATE TO MEET HMIE ACTION POINTS

The inspection report identified six main points for action. Significant progress has already been made in addressing the main points of action in the report and these are outlined below.

1 The Head Teacher should provide strong strategic leadership to address major weaknesses in the school's provision.

- It is proposed to advertise the post of Head Teacher in May. This would allow the new post holder a period of transition while the Acting Head Teacher continues in post (probably until December 2004).
- Daily meetings with school Senior Management Team (SMT) and regular meetings with all Principal Teachers are now established.
- SMT roles and remits have been redefined.
- The Head Teacher has reinforced the middle management role and responsibility of all Principal Teachers.
- Working Groups have been re-established and involve all members of staff. These groups will consider the key areas of:
 - discipline
 - raising attainment
 - quality assurance
 - school ethos
 - learning and teaching

- The Education Department through the Educational Development Service has already provided a significant level of support in the areas of team building, remits, quality improvement, action planning and dealing with challenging behaviour.

2 In order to raise attainment at all stages the school should improve the quality of learning and teaching and deal effectively with the challenging behaviour of some pupils.

Learning and Teaching

- Staff have had in-service on formative assessment designed to improve learning and teaching and classroom ethos.
- Good practice identified in the HMIE inspection is being shared across departments.
- All staff have taken part in in-service training on learning and teaching strategies.
- Through visits to other schools the Senior Management Team are identifying good practice in systems for tracking and monitoring pupil progress.
- There already is a significant increase in staff attendance at in-service training both in school time and in personal time.
- The school timetable is being revised to prevent split classes in S1 and S2 in line with national advice.

Dealing Effectively with Challenging Behaviour

- A revised behaviour management programme incorporating an improved praise system is being established. Pupils and parents are being consulted on the praise and reward system and on the development of the school discipline policy.
- A House System has been introduced. Pupils have been involved in selecting names and colours of houses. Inter-house activities are being developed to increase participation of pupils.
- Improvements have been made to the discipline, referral and time-out systems including the immediate involvement of the SMT. The new referral form is linked to stages of intervention. To avoid exclusions parents are involved at an early stage. The support base continues to be available for challenging pupils.
- The staff have been consulted on the move to a vertical house system which will now be introduced from May.
- Regular meetings of the Pupil Council have been re-established. In order to improve consultation communication and motivation, pupils are now widely involved in decisions about school day, uniform, design of the school week. A new senior school tie, badge and blazer will be introduced from May.
- Regular year group assemblies are now in place reinforcing messages concerning behaviour, ethos and dress code. In addition house assemblies will be introduced from May.
- In-service planned for the May school closure day will focus on the discipline policy, better relationships with parents and planning for improvement

3 The school and education authority should review and improve the management, deployment and provision of staff.

- Whilst acknowledging national shortages in specific subject areas, the Education Department continues to explore ways of addressing staff shortages including advertising vacant positions in the national press.

- Class sizes have been adjusted in S1 and S2 to ensure more efficient and effective deployment of mathematics staff.

4 Senior managers should work more closely with departments to ensure that pupils' experiences are of a consistently high standard. In doing so, they should introduce systematic and rigorous procedures for quality assurance and planning for improvement.

- Work on the school development plan and the subsequent action plans is well advanced and will be completed by end of April.
- Following in-service training all departments will produce a departmental development plan that will be finalised and agreed by the end of this session.
- Each member of the SMT is now linked to a group of departments and regularly attends departmental meetings to monitor development plans and ensure consistency across the school.
- A programme of classroom observation is being introduced to monitor learning and teaching and share good practice.
- A programme of staff development and review has been reinstated for all teaching and support staff.
- A principal teacher and a number of assistant teachers are due to retire at the end of this session and will be replaced by new staff.

5 The school curriculum and courses should be improved to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met and that they are able to make appropriate progress in their learning.

- The curriculum has been revised to improve breadth and balance in line with national guidelines (from June).
- Steps are being taken to improve provision and flexibility of courses to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupil course choices in S3 and S5 are being reviewed and revised. The alternative curriculum for S3 and S4, including the Excel/Asdan programme, is being reviewed. Additional support is being targeted at pupils in S1 and S2 who are not making sufficient progress in their learning.
- The revised times for the school day and a new timetable will be introduced from June.

6 The school should ensure that support for learning staff, guidance staff and agencies work together in a more integrated way to support pupils' learning and behaviour more effectively.

- The seconded Depute Head Teacher has assumed responsibility for co-ordination in this area and provides a single point of contact for all staff involved in pupil support.
- The multi-agency team has been moved to the support for learning area to further develop a whole team approach to supporting pupils.
- Roles and remits of staff in this area have been reviewed.
- Weekly meetings of the guidance and support for learning teams are now established. A representative from the support for learning team will attend the guidance team meeting and vice versa.
- The multi-agency management team meets monthly to discuss operating principles.
- The Education Department is providing additional clerical assistance to devote sufficient time to pursue entrenched non-attenders.

- A senior member of the Home School Support Service is being seconded to lead a team of HSSS workers. In conjunction with guidance and support for learning staff he will oversee and work with a group of pupils who present significant challenges, either through disruptive behaviour or through continuing absence. The HSSS team will also liaise closely with parents/carers.
- The Education Department is committed to reviewing the level of provision of support staff in all its secondary schools to ensure that sufficient attention is given to pupils' personal development needs. This will enable teaching staff to focus on learning and teaching. The Education Department recognises the special needs of Braeview Academy and will therefore pilot the introduction of a school support officer system to undertake supervisory duties in corridors, social and dining areas, and school grounds, and to take the key task of investigating disciplinary incidents and interviewing pupils away from teaching staff.
- Consideration is being given to how some of the most disruptive and disaffected pupils can be supported in meaningful activities outwith the school.
- Two after school in-service training sessions have taken place on team building for the support for learning department.

In addition to the above, significant progress has been made in improving the key area of ethos in the school and in developing its place within the community.

A monthly newsletter has been established for all parents including those of primary seven pupils in associated primaries. Meetings have taken place with a view to establishing a Parent Teacher Association and a School Board.

Claverhouse Rotary Club has donated an inter-house trophy. Several inter-house events have been planned for the summer term.

8.0 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and the Depute Chief Executive (Finance) have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Inspection of Standards and Quality in Braeview Academy, Dundee City Council – A Report by HM Inspectorate of Education – 23 March 2004.

Anne Wilson
Director of Education

10 May 2004