

Our Lady's High School

School Improvement Report 2008-09

1. Key Strengths

- Most of the school's key strengths continue to be those five identified in the school's most recent HMIE inspection Report.
- This is supported by the results of the school's own self-evaluation processes which contain evidence contributed by teaching and support staff, pupils and parents. The school's own evaluations are also reinforced by the overall findings of the HMIE Follow-Through inspection conducted this year by a team comprising members of the LLS Quality Improvement Service.
- In more specific detail, this year's Departmental Improvement Reports individually identify a number of key strengths which are evident to varying degrees across the school. These include:
 - The school's commitment to self-improvement demonstrated through its positive progress in implementing the recommendations of its most recent HMIE inspection Report.
 - Strong attainment in individual Standard Grade and National Certificate courses.
 - Support for pupils of all abilities and needs.
 - Positive relationships between staff and pupils.
 - The commitment of staff to the school's caring ethos and to Gospel values.
 - The effectiveness of classroom management skills and arrangements for learning and teaching, including the use of co-operative learning and AifL approaches.
 - More generally consistent approaches by departments in sharing learning intentions with pupils and planning pupils' learning experiences.
 - More widespread and effective use of information on pupils' learning to track progress and to plan courses.
 - The increasing use of ICT and other technologies to enhance learning and teaching, including school and departmental uses for administration and management.
 - The broad use of team approaches to curriculum planning and development.
 - increased rigour in the use of a range of processes for self-evaluation, including classroom visits.
 - The active involvement of pupils in their learning through the use of school diary planners and through other forms of self and peer assessment.
 - Generally, increased precision in departmental arrangements for the internal verification of courses.
 - Positive steps to promote positive behaviour including a number of departmental schemes based upon praise and reward.
 - The rôle of Pupil Support in general, and PSHE in particular, in contributing to school programmes such as subject choice arrangements and the use of school diary planners.
 - The positive impact of new management and faculty structures in the school.

2. Good Practice

- This year's Departmental Improvement Reports contain examples of good practice linked to the strengths identified above. Some specific examples identified in reports include:
 - Arrangements for sharing successful practice and for collaborative planning in relation to implementing A Curriculum for Excellence.
 - Cross-curricular activities, including the significant contribution of the Library

Resource Centre and its manager.

- Curricular use of ICT technologies such as data projectors and smartboards.
 - Use of FirstClass software to allow advance booking of key accommodation and resources and to provide up to date information for staff on pupils with additional support needs.
 - Displays of pupil work in classrooms, corridors and pupil social areas.
 - The strength of OSHL and extra-curricular activities in the school, including foreign exchanges and trips.
- One initiative that highlighted best practice this year was the success of the biennial school show. This year's production of Guys and Dolls provided a template for incorporating the aspirations of A Curriculum for Excellence more widely across the work of the school.
- There was a purpose and direction to the project that was clearly shared by both staff and pupils. The opportunity for staff and pupils to work together towards a common aim clearly helped promote positive relationships between staff and pupils.
 - Over 100 pupils were involved either as cast members or as front of house / back stage contributors. The cast contained a significantly large number of boys.
 - Over 70 staff from across the school contributed to the production in one way or another. As well as teaching staff, this figure included technician, janitorial, clerical and other support staff.
 - Departments worked together, for example to prepare costumes, designs, sets, music and publicity.
 - The production team also included parents and other members of the school community in key rôles.
 - While all of those participating in the production clearly enjoyed their involvement, every aspect of the show were delivered to artistically and technically exacting standards.
 - Pupil members contributed extensively to the planning of the production and reflected critically throughout on its progress.
 - The event was well publicised and promoted by the school. For example, the school organised a 'no uniform' day in which staff and pupils dressed up as characters from Guys and Dolls.
 - The four performances of the show were enthusiastically supported by parents and by the wider school community.

3. Evaluation:

What outcomes have we achieved, including achievement and attainment?

During the last five years the school has maintained good overall progress in raising attainment. The school has generally performed in line with national figures and has performed well in relation to comparator schools both at local authority and national level. Attainment in some curricular areas such as Music, Drama, Physical Education, History and Modern Studies has been excellent in national terms. Efforts made to address underachievement in some areas of the curriculum have made progress, particularly in Mathematics. However, SQA analysis and departmental reviews at the start of 2008-09 highlighted some courses in Mathematics, Science, ICT and Technical Education where overall improvements in pupil progress were required.

At the time of production of this report, SQA results for 2008-09 are not available. However, information derived from pupil tracking, including schedule examinations, suggests that S5 results will be relatively weak this year. Despite significant targeted intervention, this in large part reflects the relatively poor performance of S4 pupils in 2007-08. This year's S4 performance is expected to be stronger however.

Early presentation in Standard Grade English in 2007-08 was successful and we again expect the overall distribution of S3 and S4 English Standard Grade results to be similar in 2008-09.

The success of S4 pupils following Skills for Work courses in Construction was recognised by

an award from Motherwell College, the first school group to receive this recognition.

The growing number of pupils in middle and upper school who study ESOL courses is likely to have an impact on overall levels of school attainment this year.

The National Test results currently recorded at school level for Reading, Writing and Mathematics appear to be weaker than in 2007-08. Particularly in Mathematics, this is unexpected. At the time of writing this report, an internal check on the accuracy of the data we have recorded at school level is planned.

In terms of other achievements, the Kamwokya Partnership Project remains an important focus for cross-curricular citizenship themes in the school's work. A senior manager and peer tutor from the community spent a week in the school working with staff and pupils during the year. A member of the English Department is visiting Uganda this summer and this will provide a fresh stimulus for partnership activities next year.

A new 'Citizens' Café', run by pupils themselves, provides an innovative resource for international citizenship and Fairtrade initiatives in the school.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities take place in the school. Most departments are involved in organising these and a large number of staff and pupils also contribute on a voluntary basis to the wider life of the school. Pupils taking part in drama, music, public speaking, mathematical challenges, football and athletics all recorded particularly noteworthy achievements this year.

All S4 pupils were involved in work experience and most S6 pupils included personal development programmes in their curricular choices. A number of S6 pupils contributed as student Eucharistic Ministers and as student representatives on our Parent Council. Over 30% of S4 pupils participated in Outward Bound activities.

A successful innovation this year was a whole-school careers day. This event was integrated within the S3 and S5-S6 subject choice programmes and pupils played an important part in planning and evaluating the programme.

As part of our arrangements for primary - secondary transition, our summer school programme, organised by partnership staff, has continued to benefit a range of potentially vulnerable pupils with a range of social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs.

Through fund-raising the school continued to support a number of organisations including SCIAF and the St Andrew's Hospice. Individual pupil house councils identified how they wished funds raised during the school's Lenten Charities Campaign to be used.

How well do we meet the needs of our school community?

Pupils generally feel that their needs are well met in the school and that they are able to make progress in class. The results of a self-evaluation exercise conducted with pupils are attached as an appendix to this report. It is encouraging that many pupils surveyed felt that the use of AifL diary planners had assisted them to take greater responsibility for their learning.

The school continues to have strong support from its Parent Council and PTA. Parents nights and school events such as the Christmas Concert and Awards Ceremony are well supported. However, it has remained difficult to involve parents more fully in planning the work of the school. This was again highlighted by a low response from parents to an opportunity to take part in the school's self-evaluation process. Interestingly, both pupil and parent evaluations demonstrated a perception that the school should do more in terms of engagement with the local community. A commendable example of this is the continuing development of the school website which includes this year a well-used blog facility.

The extended Pupil Support Team including RE, PSHE, Support for Learning and Partnership staff play an important rôle in supporting individual families and pupils. As well as group working and other support projects, an information meeting for the parents of pupils studying ESOL courses was an important success this year.

Staff responses contained in this year's self-evaluation questionnaire were generally very positive. The results of the self-evaluation exercise are attached as an appendix to this report. There are well-developed mechanisms for staff consultation and for encouraging participation in the work of the school. However, improving the contribution of school committees and working groups to policy making in the school remains a priority.

How good is the education we provide?

Planning the implementation of A Curriculum for Excellence has been an important focus this year. Both staff and pupils were involved in auditing current S1 courses in relation to the four capacities of ACfE.

A priority in school and departmental improvement plans this year has been to make changes to next year's S1 courses based upon the results of this review. The allocation of time to Drama in S1 during Session 2009-10 has been increased due to the contribution it makes to delivering the four capacities and its potential for encouraging cross-curricular activities with other subject departments.

Planning and sharing successful practice in ACfE has been a major part of Inservice Day programmes this year. Staff have shared their experiences in course planning and have had opportunities to discuss and plan cross-curricular activities. Health and Wellbeing and the Kamwokya Project have been planned this year as two of the major vehicles for cross-curricular / inter-departmental work next session.

School and departmental evaluations provide evidence of more concerted approaches to teaching for effective learning. The wider use of co-operative learning and AifL approaches is significant here. A number of departments refer to success resulting from sharing learning intentions with pupils and providing pupils with opportunities for self and peer assessment. The introduction of AifL diary planners has been a contributory factor here and has been particularly successful with S1 and S2 pupils. Staff expertise in the curricular uses of ICT continues to increase. The potential curricular benefits of Glow have been included in an Inservice Day programme. Although a Phase II school, we already has two trained Glow mentors.

The school has a strength in meeting learning needs. Although pupils do not always feel that they have as wide a subject choice as they would like, the school has continued to increase curriculum flexibility this year, especially in the upper school timetable. School subject choice programmes are as responsive to pupil requests as resources allow. Auditing of course choices also indicates that only a very small minority of pupils do not in fact receive all of their first-choice subjects. New school policies have been implemented this year as planned for ESOL and for SQA Special Arrangements.

Staff, pupils and parents all believe that the school has a climate which encourages high expectations and promotes achievement. However, a few pupils who otherwise have positive views of the school commented adversely on aspects such as equality and fairness. This seems to relate to the classroom management styles of a few teachers rather than any broader school issue.

In terms of partnerships, staff, pupils and parents all viewed the school's arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils as a strength.

There has been good / very progress in addressing all of the HMIE Inspection Report recommendations, including the importance of improving arrangements for self-evaluation. School and departmental arrangements for classroom visits of various types are now well established. Most departments make effective use of annual calendars for evaluation activities. As part of this year's school improvement plan, departments have produced individual improvement reports based on their own self-evaluation procedures. This year, departmental review meetings included opportunities for the Pupil Support Team to review progress with the Headteacher.

Pupil target setting and tracking is now established in S3 - S6. There is evidence this year that more departments are making more systematic use of this information to identify

underachieving pupils and to put in place supports for these pupils.

This year the school has had a number of opportunities to display its work in developing A Curriculum for Excellence to visitors from LTS and the Scottish Government.

Aspects of our GIRFEC arrangements have also been used as exemplars at local authority level.

How good is our management and leadership?

A number of Principal Teachers identified the breadth of classroom management skills as being a strength of their departments.

As a result of the McCrone Agreement, new faculty structures have been progressively introduced in the school. These were always intended to encourage greater curriculum flexibility and opportunities for cross-curricular activity. This year, the establishment of the Faculty of Lifestyle Development has already made a significant contribution to raising pupil awareness of the links between health, fitness, nutrition and wellbeing.

This year a number of Principal Teacher whole-school responsibilities have been reviewed with resulting benefits to the co-ordination of, for example, timetabling, SQA administration, citizenship and Glow mentoring activity in the school.

Principal Teachers of Pupil Support (Guidance) have adopted a greater leadership rôle in directing the work of their respective house teams and in the processes of self-evaluation and improvement planning. A continuing priority is to improve access to pupil information by integrating Support for Learning staff more fully in the use of the Pupil Support Base.

Senior Management Team remits have been reviewed this year. A transitional structure is now in place in preparation for the establishment of an S1-S3 / S4-S6 curriculum. The DHT with responsibility for Child Welfare and Protection has taken on the responsibility of co-ordinating the work of the school's extended Pupil Support Team.

A structure for the professional review and development of single status staff has been set out. Full discussion and implementation has been delayed by the extended absence of the school's AFA.

At every level within the school there has been a concerted and co-ordinated approach to planning for A Curriculum for Excellence. Pupils have also been involved in this process. Parents have been involved through information meetings and presentations to parent representative groups, including those of associated primary schools. Newsletters and the school website have also been used to inform the wider school community of proposals, plans and developments.

The programme of Inservice Day events for the year focused heavily on curriculum development. However, the programme did include an innovative off-site day which concentrated on pastoral care issues including the school's Catholic vision and mission as well as stall health and welfare activities

Although plans were put in place this year to reduce problems caused by overlapping memberships and clashes of meeting dates for school committees, a greater contribution from most such groups to school policy would be beneficial. Attempts to include the work of school committees, including a Principal Teachers Committee, within the school Working Time Agreement continue to be unsuccessful.

The school SRG continues to explore ways of fulfilling its potential for contributing to collegiate working and school improvement. The school calendar of events for 2009-10 has been agreed.

Systems for allocating the school's budget have continued to operate in similar fashion to recent years. As a consequence of continuing budgetary constraints, all departments reported difficulties in sustaining the quality of resource provision for learning and teaching. However,

end of year savings from 2007-08 and 2008-09 were used to meet some departmental bids, mainly for IT equipment and to improve sound and lighting facilities in the school theatre. This year, to allow more co-ordinated budgetary planning, OSHL funds were allocated at the same time as per capita budgets.

New facilities this year include two upgraded computing rooms for general school use and a newly completed sensory garden. Access to these resources is managed through an electronic booking system using FirstClass. Pupil evaluations commented on a need to improve toilet, catering and sports facilities.

What is our capacity for improvement?

The school has demonstrated an ability to respond to the recommendations made in its HMIE Inspection Report. It has also shown itself to be proactive and participative in planning for curricular and organisational change. The evidence of internal and external evaluations indicates that the school is well placed to meet the range of challenges presented by the implementation of A Curriculum for Excellence.

4. Assigning levels using Quality Indicators

Quality Indicator	Level
1.1 Improvements in performance.	4
2.1 Learners' experiences.	5
5.2 Teaching for effective learning.	4
5.3 Meeting learning needs.	5
5.9 Arrangements for self-evaluation	5

5. Areas for Improvement

The following priorities have been identified for inclusion in school plans for 2009-10:

- Plan the S2 curriculum and courses for Session 2010-11 to ensure that pupil learning is based upon the four capacities of ACfE.
- Plan the S1 curriculum and courses for Session 2010-11 to ensure that pupil learning is based upon appropriate experiences and outcomes linked to the four capacities of ACfE.
- Plan the S1 curriculum and courses for Session 2010-11 to ensure the whole-school / cross-curricular delivery of appropriate experiences and outcomes linked to health and wellbeing, numeracy and literacy.

- Based on national and local guidance / advice, continue to plan the shape of the S1-S3 curriculum from August 2010 onwards to ensure that all pupils have access to the key entitlements of ACfE.

These school priorities are strongly mirrored in the priorities identified in individual Departmental Improvement Reports.

Based on the results of pupil and parent feedback, probably the other key area for the school to address is the perception that it should be more engaged in working within the local community. Continuing to seek ways of improving parental involvement in the work of the school would be one practical step towards this.