

Your Ref:

Our Ref: DISTRICTVA&E\LOCKERBIE ACADEMY\
HMIE\LET005-AMCM/RL

6 September 2012

Education Services

Woodbank
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To:

**All Parents and Carers of Pupils at
Lockerbie Academy**

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Dear Parent/Carer

HMIE INSPECTION OF LOCKERBIE ACADEMY – FEBRUARY 11 (REPORT PUBLISHED 26 APRIL 2011)

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of Education Services, Dumfries and Galloway Council, I write with an update on progress made by Lockerbie Academy following publication of its HMIE report of April 2011. You may recall that the report noted 2 recommendations and I have included below an update on the extent of progress made by the school in taking each forward. For ease of reference, I have detailed the key actions overtaken for each recommendation under broad headings

1. Increase the pace of implementing Curriculum for Excellence in line with national expectations

The Curriculum

Very good progress has been made in planning and implementing a new curricular structure for pupils in S1-3. National Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) design principles have been used to ensure a careful balance of personalisation and choice, as well as breadth of curricular coverage. During 2011-12, S1 pupils experienced full implementation of these new courses, based upon the relevant CfE experiences and outcomes (E's and O's). Consultation with S1 parents and pupils during 2011-12 indicated widespread support for the revised curriculum. Over S1-3, all pupils will now experience full coverage of the range of E's and O's at a CfE level appropriate to their learning needs.

There is now greater awareness amongst all staff of S1-3 learning priorities across curricular areas, as well as evidence of effective staff collaboration on the planning of pupil learning experiences. Learning walls, which display the skills and curricular content of a range of subject programmes, have supported this awareness-raising. Similarly, departmental curriculum plans have been shared among staff with the aim of promoting inter-disciplinary learning (IDL). As a result, a number of courses have been jointly planned by 2 or more subject departments. For example, the study of climate change for S1 pupils has been developed following collaboration between staff in geography and chemistry. In addition, all S1-3 pupils now experience a programme of key skills courses, such as 'Problem Solving', 'E-folio' and 'Media Magic', amongst others.

Pupil feedback confirms the application of this skills-based learning in a number of subject areas. An example noted by them is 'problem-solving', which is developed in mathematics and the sciences and applied in their learning in humanities and elsewhere. IDL is further promoted through an annual 'rich task', whereby S1-3 pupils participate in a series of activities linked to a theme, based on E's and O's from different curricular areas. For example, in January 2012 all S1 pupils took part in a very successful "Scotland Week" task, which involved input from a range of subject staff.

S2 pupils now follow a core curriculum which includes English, Maths and a minimum of 1 subject from each of 5 curricular areas. In addition, they study a further 3 courses selected from a number of options. This ensures that there is an element of personalisation within the broad, general education over S1-3. To inform pupil choice, detailed information booklets have been made available to parents in S1 and S2, supported by curricular information evenings.

The school is currently finalising its plans for the Senior Phase, following recent publication of National 4/5 and Higher course content.

Learning and teaching

Staff continue to develop strategies linked to formative assessment. This includes more effective pupil questioning and involvement of pupils in evaluating their own work. The senior management team (SMT) have observed some very good examples of 'active' learning and pupils taking more responsibility for their own learning. Similarly, there are some very good examples of collaborative learning. A priority for the school is to further embed pupil 'higher-order' thinking skills across the curriculum.

In line with national CfE advice, staff have been developing their planning and assessment of courses. This has involved staff participation in the authority's programme of literacy moderation, whereby key staff have discussed and agreed expectations of performance at different CfE levels. From there, key staff have shared these standards with colleagues at both school and cluster level. A cluster sub-group continues to support further development of assessment. There is now greater use by staff of learning outcomes and success criteria when planning lessons, ensuring that pupils are clearer about the purposes and expectations of their learning.

All faculties have developed and embedded in their courses a focus on the core skills of literacy, numeracy and health and well-being, based on policy advice developed by key staff and supported by staff training. A cluster-wide approach to literacy, supported by the authority, has resulted in greater consistency and clarity around pupil writing and staff expectations of pupil performance.

Wider achievements are recorded by pupils in their individual planners, with termly updates, covering progress against the 4 capacities of CfE. The on-going development of individual pupil profiles and e-portfolios (S1-3) will ensure that pupils academic progress and personal, wider achievements can be more systematically recorded and tracked. Pupils will take responsibility for developing their own profile, supported by key staff.

2. Develop more consistent and systematic approaches to identifying strengths and areas for improvement

Faculty Improvement Planning

Since April 2011, the school's robust system of internal audit has been further amended, being now more child-centred and with an increased focus on learning and teaching. The audits continue to be based on an annual rolling programme, with the relevant Principal Teacher presenting an

assessment of his/her Faculty to the SMT. To further encourage professional dialogue and sharing of best practice, a peer Principal Teacher is part of the audit team.

Annual Faculty Improvement Plans are comprehensive and take account of faculty, school and authority priorities. There is clear reference to national quality indicators as part of a faculty monitoring calendar. Faculty standards and quality reports are used by SMT to inform school priorities and can also lead to targeted observations of particular practice. All faculties meet with SMT twice during the year, covering analysis of SQA outcomes in the autumn term and a review of progress against the faculty's improvement plan priorities in the summer term. This process supports whole-school improvement planning.

Whole-School Improvement

A programme of classroom observation by senior staff is in place across the school. Detailed feedback on lessons is provided to individual staff. The 'observed' teacher completes a self-evaluation pro-forma following his/her observed lesson. In addition, peer observation, whereby staff observe each other in a less formal way, is being actively encouraged by SMT and supports professional dialogue and sharing of practice.

The current school improvement plan specifies a number of relevant priorities, including a focus on raising attainment and developing the school's senior curriculum. In finalising the plan, SMT take account of faculty, school and authority priorities. Noting HMIe observations of 2011, the plan still requires more detail around development targets to help direct the work of staff in faculties. More focus on the expected impact on young people of school priorities, and a more comprehensive overview of the school's strengths and areas for development, based on self-evaluation, would also further enhance improvement planning.

Greater account is being taken of stakeholder views in developing school priorities, evidenced through: use of the on-line facility 'survey monkey' to capture the views of staff and parents as part of the faculty audit process; completion of evaluation forms by parents following attendance at Induction Week meetings and Curricular Evening. The SMT engages with Parent Council members on a single, year-stage basis, to allow more focussed discussion.

In conclusion, pupils continue to receive a very good educational experience at Lockerbie Academy. I congratulate all staff, as well as the wider school community, on the very significant progress made in taking forward HM Inspectors' advice.

Yours sincerely

Colin Grant
Director, Education Services