

Your Ref:

Our Ref: DISTRICT\WITHSDALE\ST JOSEPH'S\
HMIE\LET001-AMCM\RL

21 May 2012

Education Services

Woodbank
30 Edinburgh Road
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To:

**All Parents and Carers of Pupils at
St Joseph's College**

Any enquiries please contact

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Dear Parent/Carer

**HMIE INSPECTION OF ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE, DUMFRIES – MARCH 2010
(PUBLISHED 27 APRIL 2010)**

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of Education Services, Dumfries and Galloway Council, I am pleased to inform you of the progress made by St. Joseph's College following publication of its HMIE report of April 2010. You may recall that the report noted four areas for improvement and I have included below a short narrative for each, describing some of the key actions overtaken by the school.

1. Involve all stakeholders in developing and implementing agreed priorities for school improvement.

Increased consultation with the range of school stakeholders, including partner agencies and staff in associated Primary Schools, has led to their greater involvement in developing and implementing the school improvement plan. Within the school, both promoted and non-promoted staff members are empowered to lead on key Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) priorities such as: the tracking and monitoring of pupil progress and achievement; reporting to parents; the delivery of Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing experiences and outcomes. A wide range of stakeholder representatives have collaborated with staff on a review of the school's Homework and Anti-bullying policies.

Through improved school communications, parents are encouraged to provide feedback to the school on matters of importance to them. This has led to an increase in parental involvement in, for example, school policy development and the review of parental reporting procedures. Following parental feedback, arrangements for Parent/Carer Consultation Evenings were reviewed and these generally now include an information session on a topic of particular relevance to the year group. This has been well-received by parents.

Increasingly, pupils have been involved in the evaluation of courses and aspects of school life, leading, for example, to changes to the curriculum and structure of the school day.

2. Adopt rigorous approaches to self-evaluation to improve outcomes for learners.

Professional dialogue continues to be an important feature of the school's on-going self-evaluation procedures. This is supported in various ways, including by: a programme of focused meetings between staff and members of the Senior Management Team; Teacher Learning Communities, whereby groups of teachers meet to share and develop ideas about classroom practice; participation in literacy moderation activity, when staff discuss and agree expectations about pupil performance within this key area. Professional Review interviews are conducted annually with all staff and emerging professional development priorities addressed. In some cases, this has led to the participation of staff in leadership development programmes and, as a result, some staff are now actively leading projects related to the implementation of CfE.

Key staff continue to review the school's quality monitoring calendar and are working to ensure that all staff make systematic use of quality indicators. Promoted staff undertake focused class observations of learning and teaching and provide feedback to teachers using a common recording format. Tracking and monitoring of pupil progress has been further developed in S1-3 and staff take appropriate account of information received from primary schools to ensure progression of learning in S1. For all pupils, targets are set and monitored across all curricular areas.

Pupil and parent/carer views are actively sought and used to inform the school's improvement agenda. As appropriate, other school partners are involved in evaluating and planning for school improvement, for example involvement of Health partners and Young People's Support Services in developing relevant school programmes.

3. Ensure that staff across the school work together effectively to meet the needs of all learners.

Overall, the capacity of mainstream staff to meet a wider range of needs in classes has increased and greater differentiation of tasks and activities is ensuring that all pupils now have access to the full curriculum. All staff, including supply staff, now have access to documentation which records the additional needs of identified pupils and which outlines strategies to help staff provide particular support for individuals. These strategies have been developed following consultation with teaching and non-teaching staff, Health professionals, Educational Psychologists, parents and pupils. The introduction of a weekly 'Personal Support for Pupils Bulletin', which highlights any new concerns and possible support strategies, is also helping ensure that all staff are more aware of their role and responsibilities in meeting the needs of every learner. Pupils and parents have expressed much satisfaction with regard to this matter. Certain pupils have piloted the use of information cards, which a pupil can use to inform a temporary teacher how they prefer to learn. Feedback on this from pupils, their parents and the temporary staff has been very positive.

The role of support for learning assistants has also been reviewed and subsequent policy issued to all staff. In addition, support teachers are now linked to designated subject departments and undertake joint planning with subject teachers to meet the needs of individuals, as appropriate. Staff training has been targeted at increasing the knowledge of both teaching and non-teaching staff on issues such as epilepsy; diabetes; dyslexia.

Improved partnership working with external sports providers, and the use of off-site sports and recreation facilities, have helped ensure that all young people with additional needs can undertake at least two hours of good quality physical education per week. Similarly, effective intervention from the school's Attendance & Liaison Officer and Home-School Link Worker has improved the attendance, attainment and achievement of pupils, including for a number of vulnerable pupils. Extended links with Skills Development Scotland and Young Peoples Support Services have proved particularly beneficial in supporting pupils at transition stages.

Continue to involve young people more in their learning.

Changes in teaching methodology, including more consistent use of Assessment is for Learning practices across the school, have resulted in pupils being more actively involved in their learning. Learning Intentions are now routinely shared with pupils. Greater use of pupil peer and self-evaluation, together with the sharing of success criteria, are helping young people develop better skills as independent learners. Recent staff development activity on Higher Order Thinking Skills has led to a focus in the classroom on these critical skills, which are enabling pupils to better evaluate information and apply their learning in different contexts. Increased use of differentiated resources, as well as improved access to ICT, has helped pupils engage better with courses at all levels and to work more independently.

Curricular options have been extended to ensure better personalisation and choice for all learners. For example, pupils in S1 can now select from a range of short programmes within health and well-being, enterprise and citizenship. In S2, pupils can choose from a range of options designed to tap into their strengths and interests and to broaden learning opportunities. Evaluations by pupils and staff of these programmes have been very positive, with views about content and delivery used to make further improvements. The Junior and Senior Pupil Councils, together with Focus Groups of pupils from each year group, have been actively involved in a review of the curriculum and teaching and learning across the school. Issues raised through this evaluation are now being addressed, such as linking fund-raising to topic work, introducing more enterprise events, increasing cross-sectoral activities and increasing the use of ICT in classes.

In conclusion, there have been a significant number of developments since 2010 and I congratulate all staff, and the wider school community, on the significant progress made following the school's inspection. It is clear that the Headteacher and staff at St Joseph's College remain committed to ensuring that all pupils progress to the highest levels of achievement, attainment and participation of which they are capable.

Yours sincerely

Colin Grant
Director, Education Services