



**NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL : EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

**HMIE INSPECTION**

**FOLLOW-THROUGH REPORT**

**LARGS ACADEMY**

**DECEMBER 2009**

## **Foreword**

HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) published a report on Standards and Quality in Largs Academy in May 2008. In consultation with the education authority, the school incorporated the recommendations arising from the HMIE report into the school improvement plan.

The education authority provided the school with advice and support in implementing the recommendations. The designated Quality Improvement Officer for the school visited the school on a regular basis to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve on the quality of its work and the progress made by the school in implementing the points for action in the original report.

This report is based on the above visits plus an extended visit by a team of Quality Improvement Officers, which was carried out in December 2009. The report provides information about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides, and comments on how the school has taken forward the main points for action. It focuses on changes in the core work of the school, and explains how the school has improved learning and how young people benefit from being at school. The report looks at the key processes which enable this to happen, and also describes developments in the “ethos” of the school, which refers to how well young people are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally it comments on the quality of leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

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## **1 The school**

Largs Academy is a non-denominational school serving the town of Largs and the surrounding area. Since the original inspection, there have been a few staffing changes.

## **2 Particular strengths of the school**

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths; these continue to be key strengths in the school.

- Commitment of staff to the school and to promoting pupils' overall achievement.
- Sustained high levels of attainment.
- Very high quality learning support and the inclusion of all pupils.
- Overall high quality of teaching.
- Leadership of the headteacher.
- Rigorous and effective procedures for monitoring and evaluation.

## **3 Examples of good practice**

- The implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Innovative cross-curricular working.
- In-school/cluster CPD provision.
- Partnership links; locally, nationally and internationally.
- Distributed leadership opportunities for all staff.
- Extensive range of lunchtime and after-school opportunities for pupils.
- Internal verification procedures.
- Pupil under achievement strategy.
- Curricular impact of International Education.

#### **4 How well do young people learn and achieve?**

Young people speak very positively and confidently about how they learn and the efforts of staff to ensure they make very good progress. They appreciate the significant number of opportunities they have to work together across all areas of the curriculum. Teachers encourage young people to evaluate their own and each other's progress. In all classes young people have extensive opportunities to be fully involved in, and have responsibility for their own learning. Under the very strong leadership of the headteacher, depute headteachers and principal teachers this practice has been developed consistently and is well embedded across the school.

Staff make very good use of information and communications technology (ICT) in learning and teaching. The school has invested very significantly in the installation of interactive whiteboards. Since the original inspection staff have further developed very consistent approaches to the sharing of good practice. They continue to make excellent progress in improving the quality of learning and teaching.

By the end of S2 most young people attain, or exceed, appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics and make very good progress in coursework across a range of subjects. By the end of S4, and by the end of S6, young people's levels of attainment continues to be very high in most national performance measures. Overall, the school continues to be highly successful in raising pupils' achievement.

#### **5 How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?**

Staff work very well with an extensive range of partners to support young people's learning. Support staff, the school nurses, the home-school link worker and the pupil welfare officer provide an excellent level of support for young people and families. The school continues to develop its structures and strategies to support vulnerable young people and those who are at risk of missing out. The school is working very effectively with parents to enable them to support their children's learning and make progress. There are very well developed curricular partnerships with associated primary schools. Curricular links across all subject areas enable young people to build very effectively upon their prior learning.

#### **6 Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?**

Staff consistently review the quality of their work and that of the school. Senior managers and principal teachers regularly visit classes to

observe lessons. There has been further development of opportunities for peer observation to generate helpful advice and encourage the sharing of good practice. All of this results in a consistently high quality of learning and teaching for young people. Young people demonstrate responsible citizenship through their involvement in pupil council, mentoring, volunteering, events organising and buddying younger pupils. Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to evaluate learning and teaching in addition to their own progress. Young people, staff and parents are consulted extensively on ways to improve the school. Staff are involved in improvement planning at departmental and whole school levels and are very strongly committed to continuous improvement. The level of staff involvement in leading developments across the school continues to be exceptionally high.

## **7 Does the school have high expectations of all young people?**

There are consistently very high expectations of young people's behaviour, dress, engagement, attainment and achievement. All pupils continue to be strongly encouraged to have high aspirations, be successful learners and are given much support in pursuing these ambitions. Young people respond very well to these measures; they take responsibility for their learning and make significant and effective contributions to the wider work of the school. Enterprising and challenging opportunities for young people permeate the curriculum. There are bright and stimulating displays of pupil work in classes and corridors exemplifying standards and recognising achievement. The school is making excellent progress in continuing to develop the recording and monitoring of young people's progress in their targets for learning and personal development.

## **8 Does the school have a clear sense of direction?**

The headteacher and depute headteachers continue to show very strong leadership and build upon the school's strengths. As a team they focus very effectively on the school's priorities for improvement. Staff speak very positively about the manner in which they are very well supported by an approachable, enabling and encouraging senior management team. Senior managers have very good working relationships with their link departments. All staff have a clear and shared vision of how they are working together in implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*. There are significant developments across the whole school in aspects of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The re-allocation of departmental teaching space within the main building has been made possible through the opening of the new computer/business education block providing an enhanced learning environment for young people. The working environment of the school has continued to improve with very effective budget control and authority support.

## **9 What happens next?**

Largs Academy has continued to provide a very good standard of education, with aspects of excellence, for all of its pupils. There are significant examples of pupils becoming successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

The school has responded very well to the recommendations of HMIE and has improved other aspects of provision. There is extensive, clear and very convincing evidence of continued and significant improvement since the original inspection. The very strong leadership and commitment of the headteacher, depute headteachers and principal teachers, complemented by teamwork and professionalism of all staff has provided a very strong basis for continued improvement. The school is performing very well and is in an excellent position to continue to improve. The education authority will continue to monitor the work of the school as part of the quality improvement programme.