

Madras College

Introduction

Madras College is a non denominational secondary school located in St Andrews. It receives pupils from 15 primary schools and serves St Andrews and the surrounding villages towards the north east of Fife. The school is sited on two buildings one and a half miles apart. There are approximately 800 fourth, fifth and sixth year pupils at the original school building at South Street in the centre of the town, and to the south at Kilrymont Road there are approximately 900 first, second and third year pupils.

Madras College was last inspected by HMIE in December 1998 when a limited number of subjects - English, Classics, Contemporary Social Subjects, Modern Studies and Business Studies were the focus. Previous to this the last full inspection was in 1987.

This review covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. The team reviewed the work of senior management, looked at the learning experience of pupils across all stages, monitored aspects of pupils' work, scrutinised documentation and interviewed staff, pupils and parents, and took account of the responses to questionnaires issued to these groups.

Background and Aims

At the time of the review (October 2005) the school roll was 1729. A School Board and Parent Teacher Association were well established and actively supported the work and life of the school. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals (FME), an indicator of social and economic deprivation, was five percent, the lowest in Fife and well below the national average. Pupil absence rates were considerably lower than the Fife and national averages and showed a decreasing pattern for the last five years. The exclusion rate was lower (less than half) the Fife average, with a fall in the number of pupils excluded last year in comparison to the previous two years.

The school's overall statement of aims, were indicated in the Prospectus 2005-06. These emphasised the intention to provide an appropriate education, a caring environment and ensure the school's place in the community. The aims were supported by a range of objectives such as -

- catering for all levels of ability,
- an appropriate experience of modern technology,
- systems for measuring achievement,
- creating a climate of good working relationships,
- involving pupils in the life and work of the community.

The school aims were reflected to some extent within the summary of development priorities in the School Plan (August 2005). Department Plans indicated action in relation to some of the priorities in the School Plan and the Statement of Aims, particularly monitoring the learning experience and developments in formative assessment (target setting).

The school had some related policies and guidelines but recognised that the overall policy base required further development and review. This was already under way with regard to CPD, the working day, the curriculum, enterprise, management and pupil support.

The school aims and action taken to achieve these, should be subject to continuous review based on self evaluation. The school now needs to review its aims to more clearly and specifically link to national and council priorities. This could include reference to current initiatives and policies such as 'A Curriculum for Excellence' and major corporate projects and processes exemplified by Integrated Community Schools and the priorities of the Children Services Plan. This process must take account of the views of the staff, pupils, parents and the wider community of the school. The overall audit and planning processes must also reflect Service guidance.

Views of the Parents and Carers, Pupils and Staff

Responses to questionnaires issued to parents and carers, pupils and staff were analysed. These are summarised below. Members of the review team also interviewed groups of pupils, parents, staff and representatives of the School Board. These views have helped to inform this report.

A third of parents and carers were invited to complete questionnaires. Of these, 60% responded. Almost all of those that responded felt that the school had a good reputation in the community and that their children enjoyed being at school. Most parents and carers felt welcome in the school and considered school reports to give them helpful information about their child's progress.

Half of those who responded felt that they did not have a clear idea of the school's priorities for improving the education of pupils. Over a quarter of parents and carers felt that consultation, on decisions that affected their children, could be improved and that the school needed to deal more effectively with inappropriate behaviour.

A third of pupils received questionnaires and of these 66% responded. Almost all of those who responded felt that they got on well with other pupils and that teachers expected them to work to the best of their ability. 92% of those that responded felt that teachers helped them when they were experiencing difficulties.

A third of those who responded felt that pupils were not treated fairly in school and that staff were not good at dealing with bullies. 38% felt that the behaviour of pupils in school was not good.

All members of staff were given the opportunity to complete a questionnaire and 60% responded. Almost all felt that staff showed concern for the care and welfare of the pupils. Over 80% of staff that responded liked working in the school and felt that pupil success was regularly celebrated.

Approximately 40% of respondents felt that the school was not well led and that communication between senior managers and staff needed to improve. Approximately 50% of staff that responded felt that standards set for pupils' behaviour needed to be upheld more consistently and indiscipline needed to be dealt with more effectively. 45% felt senior managers needed to operate more effectively as a team.

How good is the curriculum which pupils experience?

The overall breadth and balance of the curriculum was good. The curriculum structure was conventional and generally followed national guidance.

In first and second year, pupils studied an appropriate range of subjects. Social subjects were timetabled on a rota basis in first and second year, and religious education/classical studies were on a rota basis in first year. Setting was operated in mathematics in both first and second year. Since 2004 mathematics pupils in second year had started Standard Grade work in January. Information Communication Technology was introduced into the first year timetable this session. The course was taught by business and computing staff. This provided an opportunity to ensure appropriate skills development and progression from primary.

In third and fourth year pupils usually studied 8 Standard Grade courses. Access courses were offered in mathematics, modern languages and the department of special education offered a variety of courses at three levels. The biology department was also considering introducing an Access 3 course. Intermediate courses were offered in biology, chemistry, physics, fashion and textiles, hospitality, practical craft skills and product design.

Core (compulsory) religious and moral education was not offered in S3/S4. The school should review this to ensure that minimum time allocations as indicated in national advice are met.

In addition course options for third and fourth year allowed the possibility of individual pupil choice excluding two of the 8 modes of learning e.g. not to undertake an option from the creative and aesthetic, and religious and moral education modes. The school was undertaking a review of citizenship. It was hoped this would provide coverage of some elements of the RME course. The school should review these aspects.

In the fifth and sixth years pupils studied 5 subjects from Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher or Advanced Higher level. These provided the majority of pupils with appropriate progression routes. The school had effective links with Elmwood College for senior pupils to enrich and broaden their curriculum.

However there was no systematic overview of the coverage or effectiveness of core skills provision. This aspect should be reviewed.

As well as curricular liaison in English and mathematics, the Madras Cluster Joint Action plan indicated a strong basis for further collaboration in relation to Assessment is for Learning and Enterprise In Education. The school continued to develop these curriculum links with its associated primary schools. The school recently appointed a curriculum leader for modern languages. This was an opportunity to ensure appropriate progression from primary and to re-establish curriculum links in modern languages.

Recently the school had introduced the basis for an alternative flexible curricula programme. To develop the programme it was intended to include elements to improve social skills, anger management, raise self-esteem and extend college links. Practical craft skills offered from S3 and hospitality, offered in the upper school, were popular options. The school was also in discussion with Elmwood College to offer courses in hospitality, engineering, sports science and the environment.

The school curriculum group met regularly. The group was considering the relaxation of age and stage restrictions and how best to use this flexibility. This group was also considering starting standard grade work across the curriculum in second year. The school had also undertaken an audit of practical learning across the curriculum.

Are pupils achieving in line with their potential?

First and Second Year performance

For all pupils in Scotland aged 5 to 14 years a major means of measuring their performance in reading, writing and mathematics is by using externally provided national assessments or tests. Since 2004 the outcomes of these tests are no longer reported nationally, however Fife Education Service still requires all schools to test and report on this basis until the end of second year. Overall targets for reading, writing and mathematics were set by the school in 2002 for the period 2002 - 2005.

The trend in performance in reading has risen slightly over the last two years and has over a five year period been above both the Fife and national averages. Compared with schools of a similar FME within Fife, Madras performed well. School targets had been met.

In writing there has been a significant decrease in performance last session following the slight improvement made the previous year. Pupil attainment was now only slightly above the Fife average. Madras performed in line with schools of a similar FME within Fife. However school targets in writing had not been met.

As measured by national tests, the overall quality of attainment in English was adequate.

Last session there were issues relating to the provision of 5-14 assessment information in mathematics. This meant that attainment in mathematics recorded significantly below both the Fife and national averages and schools with similar FME. The school target in mathematics for that session had not been met. As measured by national tests the overall quality of attainment in mathematics was therefore unsatisfactory.

However the team was aware that the pattern of pupil performance in mathematics previously in 5-14 and in standard grade and higher was significantly better. In order to more accurately reflect this kind of performance at 5-14 the school should review national testing in mathematics and its place in the assessment framework for the standard grade curriculum started in January of second year.

Fourth Year Performance (Standard Grade)

In 2004-05 there was a decrease in the proportion of fourth year pupils achieving 5 or more awards at Level 3 (Foundation), Level 4 (General) and Level 5 (Credit) at Standard Grade. Performance at level 5 (Credit) was the lowest in the last three years. The school, however, had performed significantly better in levels 4 (General) and 5 (Credit) than the Fife average. In comparison to similar schools (based on FME), across Scotland, the school performance was below average at Level 3 (Foundation) and Level 4 (General) and slightly below average for Level 5 (Credit).

There had been a slight decrease in performance in both English and mathematics at all Standard Grade levels. However performance in these subjects remained consistently above the Fife average.

In 2004-05 fourth year pupils had performed consistently better in mathematics and physics at Standard Grade than in their other subjects. They had performed consistently less well in French and art and design.

As measured by SQA examination performance (pre appeal), the overall quality of attainment at Standard Grade was adequate.

Fifth Year Performance (Higher)

In 2004-05 there was a slight decrease in the proportion pupils achieving 1 or more awards at level 6 (Higher A-C). However there has been a sustained increase over the last three years in the number of pupils achieving 3 or more and 5 or more awards at Higher A-C. Compared with the group of similar Fife schools, Madras was performing best for 1 or more, 3 or more and 5 or more awards. In comparison to similar schools (based on FME), across Scotland, the school performance was above average for three or more and five or more higher.

As measured by SQA examination performance (pre appeal), the overall quality of attainment at Higher in S5 was very good.

Sixth Year Performance (Higher/Advanced Higher)

In relation to Higher in 2004-05 there was a slight increase in the proportion of pupils achieving 1 or more awards and a slight decrease at 3 or more and 5 or more awards at Level 6 (Higher A-C). However over the last three years performance at these award levels was consistently above all other Fife schools.

In fifth and sixth year, pupils had performed consistently better at Higher in English, mathematics, physics and modern studies than in their other subjects. They had performed less well in art and design.

In relation to Advanced Higher and in comparison to similar schools (based on FME), in Fife and across Scotland, the school performance was significantly above average.

Overall attainment as measured by SQA examination (pre appeal) in sixth year was excellent.

Intermediate Course

Pupils were presented for Intermediate courses from S3 onwards. The range of courses offered at this stage had widened over the years.

However, with several departments having increased the proportion of pupils attempting Higher in S5, the overall number of presentations had dropped. The head teacher in discussion with heads of department was reviewing the situation.

Pupil Destinations

At the end of session 2004-05 there were 281 school leavers. Of these 51% were moving onto higher education, 37% to further education and 5% into employment. The destination of 7% of the leavers was unknown. The number of pupils moving to higher education was significantly above both the Fife and national averages.

Raising Attainment

With support from the Senior Management Team a substantial number of departments had made attainment a major priority this session and were considering, in particular, developing processes to track individual progress and the use of personal targets in relation to this.

SQA examination performance was subject to review each year by senior management on a departmental basis. In order to further develop this process, whole school staff development on the revised Standard Tables and Charts (STACS) data was being undertaken. This should include departmental analysis skills in the context of both STACS and HMIe attainment data for principal teachers and other individual teachers.

In order to promote further improvements in levels of attainment the school should address the following key areas:

- procedures relating to national testing of all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics up to the end of S2
- set challenging individual pupil attainment targets across the curriculum
- develop and implement rigorous and systematic tracking of the attainment of pupil targets across the school
- develop a consistent whole school approach to SQA/Subject Review meetings.

How good are learning and teaching?

The quality of the learning experience observed by the review team ranged from very good or good in some

classes, to adequate in others. Generally learning was based on whole class instruction, question and answer, and other teacher led activity. There were opportunities in some classes for collaborative group and paired working. In some subjects staff were using individual target setting. In a few classes in first and second year there was an awareness from some pupils about levels they were working towards.

Positive features of the learning experience included

- a committed, patient teaching staff
- a generally positive relationship between staff and pupils
- a generally positive interaction between pupils
- a willingness to learn by the majority of pupils
- the use of formative assessment techniques in some classes

Pupils were generally motivated to work well. Teachers were patient, particularly when seeking to deal with occasional low level interruptions. Generally most lessons started promptly, although there was some late coming. Differentiation on the basis of task, resource and expected outcome was observed in some classes. However on occasion some pupils were no more than passive listeners (or watchers) undertaking basic tasks. There required to be adjustments to the pace of learning to ensure that it was appropriate for all pupils.

There is a need to review the pace and challenge particularly in first and second year. The school should also develop a learning and teaching policy which reflects current evidence in relation to learning styles, target setting and the use of formative assessment.

The review team considered both the provision of ICT (referring to computers, interactive whiteboards, projectors/powerpoint, other media technology) within individual classrooms and the use of this technology to support learning. At a basic level in some classes there were no computers, and no printers in evidence, and often where there were, they were not switched on. The review team acknowledges the constraints and difficulties in a split site school when using technology in general purpose classrooms, the organisation required to set it up prior to a lesson (or arrange a visit to identified computer area). However the use of ICT observed in the review week, even given these constraints, was only adequate.

Homework planners were in evidence in some classes,

and generally pupils had the clear expectation of home study. A number of subjects had homework clubs at lunchtimes and there was clear home study information provided to parents.

The physical, learning environment of a few classrooms was attractive with a good use of display, for example, to model pupil work, but there was considerable scope for improvement. Some existing displays were old or in poor condition. Classroom furniture (seats, tables and storage) was of variable quality. This did not support a positive learning environment. Improvements to this aspect should be a matter of priority.

How well are pupils supported?

The quality of support to meet pupils' needs was generally good.

At the time of the review the school was introducing a more integrated approach to pupil support based on a Pupil Support Faculty, a pupil support system involving the co-ordination of guidance, learning support, behaviour support and special education. One depute head teacher linked with behaviour, learning support and special education departments while the other depute head teacher linked with guidance. The school had also appointed a Pupil Services Manager and two School Support Officers. Their roles were primarily related to pupil lateness, uniform checks and an 'on call' classroom indiscipline system to support subject staff.

The review team acknowledges that these arrangements had only been in place for a few months, however a number of aspects were raised:

- Arrangements for integrated working across the pupil support departments were only partially effective because of continued difficulty in developing an overall team approach. For some staff, the dual management had led to inconsistencies and confusion and they felt that further direction and co-ordination by senior management was required. The school was continuing to monitor the dual management structure.
- The role of the Pupil Services Manager had been positively received by staff. However, further development of the links and co-ordination of this resource with existing support departments was required to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities.

- The location of the various support departments was seen to hinder collegiate working.
- There was a dependency on paper based information and recording systems in relation to pupil support. The school should consider the further use of ICT to assist in recording and accessing key information for pupil support systems.

Planning

Individual development plans for Department of Special Education, Behaviour Support, Learning Support and Guidance nearly all reflected current and local authority priorities. Links to school priorities were also evident. However given the development of the Pupil Support Faculty the school should ensure these planning processes reflect this faculty approach to support for pupils.

Child Protection Procedures

Staff were knowledgeable about care and welfare and Child Protection procedures. The school had generally effective anti-bullying procedures but should now review the school policy to ensure relevance to current management structures.

School Liaison Group

The multi agency School Liaison Group met on a six weekly basis and was effective with a clear referral and feedback system to relevant staff. The recent audit of the School Liaison Group liaison mechanism with all participating partners was very positive and had identified action to further strengthen good practice. The school's Joint Strategy Group was designed to ensure that resources within the school were fully considered when support was sought for pupils.

Transition Arrangements

Transition arrangements for pupils moving from P7 to S1 were supported by a well structured programme of visits to associated primary schools by learning support and guidance staff. This ensured systematic identification of pupils needs and allowed early planning to support pupils with additional support needs. The subject departmental referral system was well established. Pupils appreciated the support they received, felt well supported when they asked for help and felt safe and secure.

Extra Curricular Activities

The wide range of extra curricular activities provided by staff enriched pupils' personal and social development. These activities were well organised and offered a variety of sporting, cultural and interest based opportunities and experiences for the pupils. Many pupils participated in this programme and viewed the activities positively.

Personal and Social Education Programme (PSE)

The PSE programme covered an appropriate range of topics and was taught by guidance staff, Senior Management staff and volunteers. However, the school acknowledged the programme needed to be reviewed and was currently considering a wider range of teaching approaches. The school should be commended for drawing on successful strategies used in the drama department to inform this review process. The review should also consider building on prior learning as well as promoting appropriate learning and teaching approaches.

Pupils were given good curricular and vocational guidance through PSE. Very good involvement of two careers advisers on three days every week further supported pupils considering course options. 'Careers Box' sessions and the 'Make It In Scotland' programme supported pupils at transition between stages. On request pupils in S4-S6 were offered individual interviews with career advisers. Pupils in S4 were also offered work placements through an effective 'Aware' programme. A majority of pupils participated in this opportunity.

College Links

The school had a well established link with Elmwood College for S5/6 pupils, along with peers from Waid Academy and Bell Baxter High School, to participate in a range of courses - welding, beauty, hospitality and psychology. There was also a link with fourth year pupils. This was well co-ordinated by guidance staff. Through curricular flexibility the school was developing a range of opportunities for pupils and now needed to coordinate flexible curriculum options on a whole school basis.

Guidance Structures

Recently the school had reviewed guidance structures

and retained a horizontal system (pupils from the same year group) throughout the school. Guidance staff encouraged pupils to review their own progress, set personal targets and some subject targets. Staff provided good support to pupils choosing subjects and courses for higher education. The school now needed to develop more structured links between guidance and subject staff to establish a more systematic approach to tracking and target setting to improve pupil attainment and achievement.

Learning Support

Learning Support Staff provided an effective service to pupils through direct tuition and in class support. Staff also provided effective support overall with additional assessment arrangements for pupils. The department had provided helpful information about a range of conditions to support subject staff. They also contributed to course development in some subjects. A daily diary was operated to assist communication amongst staff and to request readers and scribes. Staff effectively linked with the associated primaries at the Primary7/first year transition.

Behaviour Support

Behaviour support staff provided very effective provision for pupils accessing the support centre. Pupils were offered effective in-class support and well structured programmes in the base. The support centre at both Kilrymont and South Street also provided a supervised safe area to support vulnerable pupils during break times. Good links had been established with the off-campus support centre to help pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The Principal Teacher of Behaviour Support led effective training for S6 pupils participating in the school 'peer tutor system'. The system currently involved 150 volunteer S6 pupils supporting a number of S1 pupils. It was very well organised and successful.

Department of Special Education (DSE)

Pupils in the DSE received good support. Pupils had clear learning opportunities based on agreed targets within Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). Staff provided appropriate learning experiences in the department and assistance for pupils accessing mainstream classes. The Principal Teacher had positive links with subject colleagues for pupils in mainstream. The majority of pupils attended some mainstream classes.

Auxiliary staff provided effective support to pupils in classes. They attended whole school in-service day activities. To further respond to pupil need the school should consider looking at systems to increase auxiliary flexibility.

Successful features of support for pupils included the:

- school liaison group
- arrangements for P7/S1 transition
- range of extra curricular opportunities offered to pupils
- assistance offered to pupils by the behaviour support centre
- well planned careers programme supported by work experience
- peer tutoring

How good is the school ethos?

Pupils and staff strongly identify with the school and are proud to be associated with it. Morale and motivation amongst pupils was generally high, and the impression from parents was one of a welcoming environment. Relations between staff and pupils was generally positive. Morale amongst staff was variable.

Pupils at Madras College were generally well behaved. The processes relating to the management of pupil behaviour were known and well documented. In each classroom the Ground Rules were displayed. Pupil and Class Commendations were positively received by pupils and were displayed in some rooms. There were handbooks in each room which clearly indicated expectations of staff in this context. In this respect the information provided to supply staff was to be commended. Recent improvements to identifying why pupils were out of class had been well received by staff. This year an additional resource had been introduced based on a Pupil Services Manager and School Support Officers. Again this was seen positively.

However there was a strong belief amongst staff and some pupils, that where indiscipline existed, it was not effectively or consistently dealt with. There was also some evidence from pupils of bullying behaviour. The basic concern amongst staff was the lack of clarity about responsibility for dealing with poor behaviour. It was felt that all staff and departments required further awareness in consistently promoting positive behaviour in classrooms and corridors. Behaviour was currently one aspect being considered by a pupil support group.

Another area of inconsistency related to the application of council policy in aspects of care and welfare processes, for example in relation to Race Relations. This should be addressed.

How good are staffing, resources and accommodation and how well are they managed?

Staffing

Overall the school was very well staffed. The school had made a conscious and significant investment in staffing, most recently exemplified by the Pupil Service Manager and School Support Officers. There was a balance of experienced and recently qualified teachers. Teachers and support staff were well qualified and exhibited a genuine commitment to the school and their pupils.

Resources

As with other Fife Council schools, overall budget allocation for Madras College was based on size and pupil roll. In response to the split site the school had an enhanced staffing complement in relation to teacher travel time, senior management, administrative support and the library. Additional support was given in the school's B allocation budget ie general administrative and supply costs excluding classroom materials. This year there was also an enhanced grant in relation to ICT.

There was a significant and well used library resource which presented pupils with a range of traditional and electronically based reading and research opportunities.

At a whole school level the budget and resourcing was managed by the Head teacher. A significant basis for resourcing was the 'A allocation' made to all departments. Departments also had access to other sources of support on a needs or request basis.

It is acknowledged that the school had made some investment in ICT and had targeted departments which were key users and that it was experiencing difficult networking problems. However, the potential for ICT to provide efficient administrative support for staff was not being fully realised. The relative lack of resources in relation to technology and the physical classroom learning environment will hinder sustainable development in curriculum design and learning opportunities if not addressed.

In summary, available finance was considered sufficient to support the work of the school. In addition the Education Service devolved management procedures

allowed the head teacher appropriate budget and resourcing flexibility. However apart from staffing, the deployment of these resources in technology, accommodation and other resources was not adequate.

Accommodation

Both buildings, Kilrymont Road and South Street, were generally clean and there had been some recent redecoration. The historic frontage to the South Street building remains impressive and there had been some restoration work. The related cost had been raised by voluntary subscription. However, there were major concerns about the general appearance and state of care of the school, particularly the Kilrymont Road building.

The environment of some classrooms has already been commented on, but too many lacked ownership. The metal framed windows in the Kilrymont Road building presented problems relating to temperature, draft and leakages. At a basic level the windows required to be cleaned inside and out. The level of extraneous noise in many classrooms could be reduced by the introduction of carpets and different furniture.

Staff toilets in several locations at Kilrymont building were basic. In the South Street building there was effectively an outside toilet which was barely adequate. Pupil outside toilets were not considered adequate. The lack of shelter at Kilrymont Building in inclement weather was commented on by some pupils.

In the corridors and open spaces there was some monitoring of pupil movement by senior and other staff. The introduction of new locker space in the Kilrymont building had considerably eased the congestion in that area, improving health and safety aspects. However there were particularly busy areas at both change over and break times in both buildings - the stair near the main hall in South Street and the stair between the locker area and the foyer in Kilrymont. There was some evidence that the monitoring of pupil movement and behaviour in the corridors should be reviewed.

A large number of pupils travelled long distances from home to Madras College. There was a concern about the pick up point at South Street, where pupils waited in a public area and moved to board buses which had not always stopped in the allotted area. There was also some comment about behaviour and overcrowding on buses from pupils. Staff supervision of pupils in this context was commendable but the number of staff involved only adequate. It is recommended that safety aspects in this context be reviewed.

The dining facilities at Kilrymont building were adequate and the food on offer appropriate. Pupils were observed to enjoy this aspect. At South Street the dining area was small. The queuing system in both buildings was time consuming, and may at South Street have forced pupils to look elsewhere for food. The facility at South Street was mainly used by the senior (sixth year) pupils, it was also used as their common room. This may have been another reason why some senior pupils tended to find lunch from the town centre outlets.

How well is the school led?

In response to this question the review team considered evidence in relation to management, leadership and quality assurance at Madras College. The main areas of focus were in relation to leading and managing learning and teaching, human and physical resources and strategies for school improvement.

The head teacher was hard working and committed to the school, and displayed sound knowledge of his staff. He held a strong personal commitment to the idea of an all round education for pupils in terms of both the formal and extra curricular experience. He had developed positive relationships with parents, including the School Board and Parent Teacher Association and the community in general.

In addition to the head teacher, the senior management team included seven depute head teachers. These staff had made some effective contributions to the strategic direction of the school. They were clearly committed to the school and its community, and most staff, pupils and parents found them approachable and supportive.

Overall The Head teacher had provided a general direction for the school. This was most recently (2004) exemplified by the development of the Staffing Plan and Implementation Plan. The plan included a new, flatter management structure with anticipated improvements in the balance of strategic and operational duties, relocation of the administrative centre of the school to the Kilrymont building and the refocusing of the head teacher's time across the school. This plan represented a considerable cultural change for all staff which at the time of the review was not complete.

However there was a lack of the kind of shared vision and effective teamwork that would normally be associated with such an experienced senior management team.

This had compromised their corporate effectiveness in each leadership context - leading and managing learning and teaching, human and physical resources and strategies for school improvement.

Over the past few years this had impacted on the clarity, rigour, consistency and quality of concerted action on whole school priorities, particularly in the following areas

- The development of a systematic and valued whole school self evaluation process
- School planning and improvement processes - there was a lack of clarity amongst staff, parents and pupils about whole school priorities and actions to achieve them
- Raising attainment and achievement across the school but particularly in the first to fourth years, including effective target setting with pupils
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the learning experience
- Managing resources to sustain development priorities

Improving the School

A range of action points are indicated throughout this report and should be the basis for building on the key strengths of the school.

Key Strengths

The following key strengths were identified:

- The very good reputation the school enjoys both within and out with the immediate community, underpinned by newsletters, press communications and links with former pupil organisations
- Pupils enjoy being at school and this is supported by parents
- Staff demonstrated a strong commitment and concern for their pupils and their care and welfare
- Opportunities to participate in extra curricular activity for example sport, interest clubs, arts and music, charity fund raising, outdoor pursuit are extensive and the participation rate by both staff and pupils is exceptionally high as is parental support for the variety of cultural events

- Attainment at Advanced Higher and Higher is very good, as is the associated senior school experience
- There are strong, traditional links with the community as exemplified by the work of the school Board, PTA, various charities, individual parents/groups, attendance by staff and pupils at various sporting and historic civic events
- Partnership with Community Use of the school

Key Recommendations for school improvement

In addition to addressing the other points for action identified throughout this report, the school together with the Education Service Quality Assurance Team should focus on the following :

- The school should develop more systematic and rigorous approaches to self evaluation, quality assurance and improvement planning, with particular reference to learning and teaching, analysing attainment, tracking pupil progress and target setting, The overall audit and planning process should reflect Service guidance.
- The Education Service should continue to work with the head teacher and the senior management team to address those aspects of leadership and teamwork mentioned in the report. The senior management team should consider as part of this a more effective involvement of Principal Teachers and a review of the constraints of split site organisation.
- There should be improved communication with parents particularly in relation to changing school priorities, and with and between staff. This would involve a review of the effectiveness of existing networks and the increased use of electronic communication.
- Review attainment in the first to fourth years and the impact of the developing formative assessment approaches to teaching and learning. The review should include consideration of the effectiveness of current differentiated approaches, the use of ICT and the need for a Learning and Teaching policy.

- Planning and review should now be undertaken in relation to resource allocation. This should focus on the provision and effective use of ICT and the improvement of the physical learning environment (accommodation). Given the increased devolution of responsibility to schools in relation to budget forecasts and projections, an aspect of this review should consider overall financial management (transparency, roles and responsibilities) and the potential for a Business Manager.
- Further review management and coordination of the pupil support strategy.

Members of the review team were :

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