



**West Lothian Council
Education and Cultural Services**



HMIe PROGRESS REPORT 2010

**Armadale Academy
West Lothian Council
January 2010**

Contents	Page
1. The Inspection	2
2. Continuous Improvement	2
3. The Action Plan	2
4. Progress towards the main point for action	3 – 6
5. Conclusion	6

HMIE Progress Report

1. The Inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Armadale Academy in January 2008. **This was a very good report.** Of the 17 areas assessed the school received 1 Excellent, 10 Very Goods, 4 Goods and 2 Adequates. One of the Adequates was for Accommodation and Facilities and this has obviously been addressed with the opening of the magnificent new school building in August 2009. The other adequate related to attainment in S5 / 6 and resulted in the point for action noted below.

To continue to work to improve attainment, particularly at S5 / 6, by extending good practice in learning and teaching more consistently across the school

It should be stressed that for a full inspection to result in only one point for action is very unusual and an achievement in itself. The school prepared an action plan indicating how they would address this point and this action plan has been subsumed into subsequent School Improvement Plans.

2 Continuous Improvement

Since the inspection in September 2007, the Headteacher and the staff team have worked effectively to continue to improve teaching approaches and learning experiences for all pupils through the implementation of Assessment is for Learning strategies. Staff and pupils have made increasing use of self evaluation strategies and have encouraged the development of pupils' skills as independent learners. Progress in this area has been very good.

Very good progress has also been made in terms of S5 / 6 attainment. The implementation of selective presentation strategies in Third Year and the facilitation of two Year Higher courses in some subjects have resulted in improved attainment in SQA Higher Grade exams.

3 The Action Plan

To address the action point, the school identified 3 main priorities.

- ◆ To improve attainment at Higher level in S5 / 6
- ◆ To improve the quality of Learning and Teaching through the implementation of Assessment is for Learning Strategies
- ◆ The development of strategies to better meet pupils' needs

4 Progress

a. Improving Attainment in S5 / 6

There were three targets within this area.

◆ **Early SQA presentation of S3 pupils in specific subjects**

The school continued to develop its S3 – S6 curriculum to allow SQA Exam presentation for some of its pupils in English, Maths, French and P.E. in Third Year. Pupils are only presented in Third Year when they are judged by their teachers to have the potential to achieve. This has been very successful. Pupil numbers achieving Credit Awards for the last two exam diets are as follows:

	English	Maths	French
2008	50	18	38
2009	40	21	22

In addition a number of pupils in Third Year have been presented at Intermediate 1 level in Maths and PE and have gained A – C passes as follows:

	Maths	PE
2008	23	41
2009	37	28

◆ **The introduction of a 2 year Higher course in specific subjects.**

The school's success in S3 Credit Level presentations has enabled it to establish two year Higher sets in English, Maths and French starting in S4. This gives these pupils additional time to achieve at this level and has contributed to the improvement in S5 / 6 Higher results noted later in this report.

◆ **The provision of courses for pupils of all abilities in S5 / 6 to ensure that they are challenged at an appropriate level together with appropriate coursing to Higher and Intermediate courses.**

Additional Intermediate 1 courses were developed to meet the needs of some Fifth Year pupils and the number of Advanced Higher courses was also increased to meet the needs of the school's most able pupils. The school also improved its coursing of pupils to appropriate courses in S 5 / 6 by rigorous self-evaluation and by making more effective use of statistical data provided by the SQA. This was confirmed by fewer No Awards at both Higher and Intermediate levels. The school's curriculum now consists of a mix of Standard Grade and National Qualification courses in S3 – S6. This flexibility allows the school to better meet the needs of all of its pupils.

The **net effect** of these improvements on the school's attainment at Higher is shown below. These figures are for S5 and the percentage is based on the S4 Roll of any given year group.

	% 1+ Highers	% 3+ Highers	% 5+ Highers
Average for exam diets between 2003 and 2007	25	12	5
Average for exam diets 2008 and 2009	31	18	7

In addition the percentage of Advanced Highers increased from 4% in 2008 to 7% in 2009. There were significantly more presentations and the quality of the passes had also improved.

As can be seen there has been a **significant improvement in attainment at S5 / 6 level** over the last two years. This aspect of the HMI Action Point has been successfully addressed.

b. Improving the quality of Learning and Teaching through the implementation of Assessment is for Learning Strategies

There were two targets within this area.

- ◆ To further develop and implement new **teaching** approaches to improve pupils' learning experiences and their involvement and engagement in learning.
- ◆ To further develop and implement new **learning** approaches to improve pupils' learning experiences and their involvement and engagement in learning.

The main focus of development was in the implementation of Assessment is for Learning techniques in the classroom. Staff development and sharing of good practice in this area featured prominently in the course of the last two sessions. This involved all teaching staff in the discussion and development of improved learning and teaching strategies.

These included:

1. Review of "Good Lesson" strategies
2. Learning Outcomes and Success Criteria
3. Improved Questioning
4. Comment Marking
5. Staff and Pupil Self Evaluation Techniques
6. Participative Techniques including the further development of group activities and collaborative working opportunities.
7. The further development of pupil target setting / next step procedures to increase pupil involvement in this process.
8. The development of pupils' skills as independent learners

Staff are now more knowledgeable and confident in the use of AifL techniques as evidenced by departmental minutes, staff evaluation and classroom observation. **Pupils** are more engaged with their own learning, better able to identify their strengths and areas for improvement and

show more capacity for independent learning. This has been evaluated by an AifL audit of staff and pupils' opinions compared with a baseline measure.

The **teaching** focus this session has been on improving questioning techniques. The **learning** focus has been on further development of pupil target setting / next step procedures to increase pupil involvement in their learning.

The new **learning** and **teaching** approaches have been implemented in all subject areas and year groups and have been evidenced by inclusion in the departmental improvement plan, by classroom observation, peer and self evaluation, through departmental minutes and policies and through whole school and departmental quality assurance procedures

School policies on Learning and Teaching, as well as Assessment and Reporting, were reviewed and revised to incorporate Assessment is for Learning approaches.

The **net effect** of these initiatives has been to **extend good practice in learning and teaching more consistently across the school** as required within the action point.

c. The development of strategies to better meet pupils' needs

There was one target within this area.

- ◆ To further develop and implement subject departmental structures and procedures relating to meeting pupils' needs.

This included:

Effective differentiation of classroom materials

Classroom observation by promoted staff enables good practice, in relation to differentiation, to be shared. Effective differentiation strategies are noted at departmental meetings. Differentiation is also included in many departmental Improvement Plans. Pupils' needs are met through continuing liaison with Support for Learning. This includes a 'bidding' system for extra support and development time and Individual Education Plans for specific pupils which are regularly evaluated and amended.

Raising of staff awareness of pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN)

The Student Support folder is regularly updated and in-service delivered to staff on specific pupils and their needs. The confidential pupil booklet is regularly updated to ensure all staff are familiar with all pupils and their needs.

Continuation of advice from Support for Learning on the development of new materials and teaching approaches

While support in class for pupils with additional needs continues, staff have been encouraged to make more use of Support for Learning staff for advice on, and development of, materials and teaching approaches to meet pupils' needs.

Each Department to have a designated link person with Support for Learning. Support for Learning attendance at departmental meetings as required

Regular meetings take place between Support for Learning and the designated link person from each department. These meetings are minuted and discussed at departmental meetings. Support for Learning staff attend departmental meeting as required.

This priority did not form part of the stated requirements of the action point but the school felt it to be implicit in it. Improving attainment involves identifying and addressing pupils' strengths and weaknesses and this involves both subject staff and Support for Learning staff in meeting the needs identified.

The **net effect** of these initiatives has been to promote better liaison between subject staff and Support for Learning staff to better meet the needs of all of the school's pupils.

5. Conclusion

Armada Academy continues to provide a very high standard of education for its pupils, in partnership with parents and the wider community. The high standards and key strengths noted in the HMIe Report have been maintained. The school has responded effectively and comprehensively to the action point noted within that report.

The very effective leadership of the Headteacher and the strength in leadership for learning across the school, noted in the HMIe Report, has enabled and empowered staff to develop further improvements in teaching and learning. These developments have resulted in improved pupils' attainment and achievement.

The school is well placed to sustain and build on the very good practice that was recognised in the original inspection.