

**Cedars School of Excellence  
Greenock, Inverclyde**

**28 August 2001**

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# Registration Inspection of Cedars School of Excellence Greenock, Inverclyde

## 1. Introduction

Cedars School of Excellence was inspected in April 2001 to evaluate the appropriateness of its provision. This inspection will provide evidence for the Registrar of Independent Schools in making the decision about full registration for the centre.

The inspection covered key aspects of the provision of the school, including the adequacy of school premises, resources and staffing, the efficiency and suitability of learning and teaching, the quality of support for pupils, including arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils and child protection, and the appropriateness of management arrangements. HM Inspectors also evaluated the extent to which the school's provision met its stated aims.

HM Inspectors discussed the work of the school with staff and spent time with pupils in classes. HM Inspectors spoke to parents, interviewed the Health and Safety adviser and met with representatives of the Board of Governors.

## 2. The school

### Background

The school opened in August 1999. It is provisionally registered with the Registrar of Independent Schools to provide a Christian education for pupils from Primary 1 to Secondary 2. It is managed by a Board of Governors

under the auspices of Struthers Memorial Church. At the time of the inspection the roll was 29, organised into three class groups. There were seven pupils in P1 to P4, sixteen pupils in P5 to P7 and six pupils in S1 and S2. Attendance was above national levels.

**The Aims of the School**

The school's aims centred on education in a Christian community. They were clearly stated in the prospectus and shared with parents at initial enrolment meetings. These aims emphasised the provision of a happy, safe environment and the achievement of academic success through individual programmes and small class sizes.

**Ethos**

The school's ethos was very good. Pupils, parents and staff were proud of their school and there was a strong sense of community. Relationships between pupils, staff and volunteers were very positive. Staff made good use of praise to motivate and encourage pupils who were well behaved and considerate. They worked conscientiously. Each day began with a religious assembly at which pupils' achievements were celebrated.

### **3. School Premises, Resources and Staffing**

**Accommodation**

The accommodation was fair overall. The school was located in a detached church hall which was well maintained and had good quality furniture and fittings. The building had been well organised to provide teaching space and office accommodation. There was adequate storage. Pupils from P1 to S2 shared a large hall which had been divided into three workbases. Pupils in S1 and S2 also made use of an adjacent room for part of the week. Recent alterations had improved the toilet facilities. There was a small playground at the front of the building. Although there was no space for physical education, pupils used the local sports centre every week. There were insufficient facilities for courses in technical education and home economics for secondary pupils and the school did not have a laboratory for science. The

Health and Safety Adviser had carried out a thorough risk analysis and had developed comprehensive guidelines covering all aspects of safety and security.

## **Resources and Staffing**

The school was generally well resourced. The headteacher had a delegated budget to purchase equipment. The school benefited from many financial donations and the church provided funding for additional materials where necessary. The school had an impressive range of information and communications technology (ITC) equipment. It needed to increase resources for environmental studies and to broaden the range of library books.

Staffing provision was very good. Most staff were qualified teachers. The two primary class teachers worked full time but all other staff, including the headteacher, worked for part of the week. Only three of the thirty staff were paid employees with contracts of employment. The remaining staff, including the headteacher and the head of secondary classes were unpaid volunteers. Some of the staff held part-time teaching posts in schools managed by local education authorities. All staff were highly committed to the pupils in their care.

## **4. Efficiency and Suitability of Curriculum, Learning and Teaching**

### **Primary and Secondary**

At the time of the inspection the school hours were shorter than those recommended. The Board of Governors planned to rectify this from the start of the new session, by bringing school hours into line with other schools managed by education authorities.

## **Primary**

### **The Curriculum**

Overall, the primary curriculum was good. It was broad and balanced. Pupils from P5 to P7 were learning French. All pupils had an “out of school day” each week and a worthwhile programme of educational visits had been undertaken. The school’s first priority had been to develop programmes of study in English language and mathematics which were almost in place. The school had also developed very good programmes in music and physical education. More attention should be given now to environmental studies, and to aspects of art and design and drama to ensure that pupils develop an appropriate range of skills. The school should place more emphasis on developing pupils’ investigative skills.

Teachers planned individual programmes in English language and mathematics for pupils and provided a broad outline of work to be covered in other areas. Written plans did not include sufficient detail of how learning and teaching was to be organised. These plans should set out clearly what pupils are expected to learn. They should be used to evaluate how successful learning and teaching has been.

### **Learning and Teaching**

The quality of learning and teaching in the primary classes was good. Pupils were enthusiastic, hard-working and well motivated. Most pupils were given appropriate tasks. However, a few pupils at P1 to P4 required more challenging activities and a quicker pace of learning. Teachers used a range of teaching approaches including class, group and individual work. They gave clear instructions and explanations and made good use of praise and encouragement to develop pupils’ self-confidence. Teachers needed to extend their use of questioning to encourage pupils to give more detailed responses. Arrangements for assessing and recording pupils’ progress were fair. Teachers kept some informal records and knew their pupils very well. They made use of national tests to confirm their judgements of pupils’

attainment. Teachers should develop more systematic procedures and make use of assessment information to set targets with pupils.

## **Secondary**

### **The curriculum**

Overall, the quality of the secondary curriculum was good. Pupils studied English, mathematics, science, history, geography, modern studies, French, art, music, physical education, religious and moral education and personal and social education. Technological studies focused mainly on computing. The school was exploring ways of providing fuller programmes in home economics and technical education. Teachers adapted existing space to give pupils good experience of practical work in science. Studies integrating various aspects of the curriculum were a very good feature of the provision, particularly as they were linked to a planned series of well-chosen educational visits. The school should review timetables to spread the teaching of French, mathematics and science throughout the week to improve the continuity of teaching.

The planning of courses was good overall and very good in several subjects. Courses provided progression and careful preparation for pupils' transfer to other schools for S3. The most effective planning formats gave details of learning and teaching, and assessment. They also included arrangement for evaluating the effectiveness of programmes.

### **Learning and Teaching**

At the secondary stage, the quality of learning and teaching was good overall. Pupils applied themselves well to their work. Their skills in discussion and working together were very well developed. The presentation of classwork was variable, although there were many examples of thoughtful, neat written assignments. Pupils had a high level of skill in using computers and were ready to make more use of them in their everyday learning. Lessons and tasks were carefully adapted to

meet each pupil's learning needs. Teachers provided very thorough tutorials for individuals and small groups. They gave pupils very good opportunities for discussion and investigation and for learning at first hand in the community. Some teachers challenged pupils to think by asking demanding questions and encouraging them to respond at length. Most teachers provided very helpful feedback on their work. The school should consider ways of helping teachers to share very effective practices with one another.

Generally, the pace of learning was appropriate, but further adaptations were needed to ensure that pupils did not spend too long on the same kind of task. The school's approach to homework was generally good. The arrangements for assessing pupils' attainments and progress in programmes were generally good. Teachers used the results to inform their teaching. In some subjects pupils were clear about their learning targets and their progress in achieving them. This good practice should be extended to all subjects.

## **5. Support for Pupils**

### **Support for learning**

In the primary classes, pupils were generally well supported in their classroom activities by teachers and staff. There were clear procedures for identifying pupils who needed additional help with learning. Teachers prepared detailed individual plans for each pupil but needed to focus more on attainment targets in key areas.

Specialist teachers provided very good support for secondary pupils in their subjects. In addition, pupils had individual interviews with the head of secondary education who acted as a guidance teacher. The headteacher fulfilled the role of learning support teacher and identified the needs of pupils with specific difficulties in literacy. Class teachers supported pupils in all aspects of mathematics. The school needed to develop

a more systematic approach to monitoring the strengths and development needs of each pupil across the curriculum.

### **Personal and Social Education**

In the primary classes, staff encouraged pupils' personal and social development very effectively through a programme of classroom activities, planned responsibilities and weekly outings. Termly residential visits provided older pupils with experience of community living and encouraged their interest in outdoor activities. Pupils actively raised money for charities. The health education programme included aspects of personal safety, healthy living and relationships. The coverage of sex education had been agreed with parents. Drug education focused mainly on self-protection.

The programme of personal and social education for secondary pupils was supplemented by studies in other curricular areas. The strengths of the school's approach included the development of pupils' self awareness, social understanding and careers education. The school was now at a stage of being able to review all of the elements of the programme to ensure progressive coverage of each element, particularly health education.

### **Care and welfare**

Staff provided very good levels of support for pupils' care and welfare. They were sensitive and responsive to any difficulties pupils faced. The school very successfully promoted good relationships and positive behaviour. It had very detailed guidelines to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

## **6. The Management of the School**

### **Overall management and leadership**

The school was managed on a day-to-day basis by the headteacher and the head of secondary who both served on the Board of Governors along with a church representative and a parent who was also the Health and

Safety Adviser. The Board met regularly to discuss whole school issues. However, their exact responsibilities were not yet clearly defined. The headteacher worked for half of each week in the school and demonstrated a high level of commitment. She had developed very positive relationships with pupils, parents and staff. Her open and approachable style had helped promote a strong sense of teamwork. She had led a number of developments in both the primary and secondary departments. The head of secondary worked for part of each week also. She taught English to secondary pupils and provided a high level of support to the headteacher and to her specialist colleagues. Both staff worked flexible hours and at times in the week, both were present. On one day each week, neither the headteacher nor the head of secondary was available and the geography teacher was in charge of the school. All promoted staff had clearly defined remits and worked well together. The day-to-day organisation of the school was very effective. However, current arrangements did not adequately specify responsibilities for the overall management of the school. The Board of Governors should review the management structures to clarify the nature and full extent of the responsibilities of the church, the Board and the headteacher.

**Quality assurance and development planning**

The headteacher monitored primary teachers' forward plans and regularly worked in classes with teachers and pupils. The head of secondary had an overview of the development of programmes undertaken by specialist teachers. She met formally with them each year to discuss the progress of pupils and the effectiveness of programmes. She also had more informal meetings and monitored plans and reports on pupils. The school had begun to use performance indicators to improve aspects of its provision. The headteacher had identified the need to develop more focused and systematic approaches to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school. The headteacher had worked with staff to produce the first three year development plan for the school. The plan

contained a limited amount of detail and did not include timescales, responsible personnel, resources or success criteria. However, the school had successfully developed many aspects of its provision. The work of individual teachers on developing programmes was commendable. The school was now in a strong position to produce a revised plan with a manageable set of priorities for the next year.

## **7. Summary of Overall Quality of Provision**

**Overall provision** Overall, the school provided a good quality of education for its pupils within a caring and supportive environment. Staff were highly committed and pupils were making good progress in their classwork. The school had identified aspects which required further development and was already planning improvements in a number of areas. The full implementation of curriculum programmes and assessment approaches, and clarification of management structures will improve provision further.

## **8. Key Strengths**

- The positive ethos, the sense of community and the very good relationships between staff and pupils.
- The behaviour and diligence of the pupils.
- The very positive relationships with parents.
- The level of staffing and the commitment of staff to the school.
- The very good range of educational outings to enrich pupil's experience.

- The very good arrangements for pupil's care and welfare and the promotion of personal and social development.

## **9. Main Points for Action**

- The Board of Governors should lengthen the school day in line with their plans.
- The school should develop programmes of study in environmental studies and art and design for primary pupils.
- At the secondary stages, the school should put in place its plans for the teaching of home economics and technical education and address the weaknesses in the timetable.
- Staff should improve their procedures for planning the curriculum and for assessing pupils' progress at the primary stages.
- Staff should ensure that pupils have an appropriate level of challenge in their work. They should increase the pace of learning for some pupils.
- The school should make more use of the development planning process and establish more systematic procedures for monitoring the overall quality of provision.
- The Board of Governors should review the management structures to clarify the nature and extent of the responsibilities of the church, the Board and the headteacher.

*HM Inspectors will refer this report to the Registrar of Independent Schools who will decide whether or not to fully register the school.*

May C Watt  
HM Inspector  
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector  
Western Division

## How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from the office at the address below or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our web site: [www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie)

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford HMCI whose address is given below. If you are unhappy with the response, you will be told in writing what further steps you may take.

HM Inspectorate of Education  
Europa Building  
450 Argyle Street  
GLASGOW  
G2 8LG

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