

Mearns Castle High School

Standards and Quality Report

Session 2009-10

The Standards and Quality Report – key purposes:

- to report on our progress in implementing the priorities listed in the School Improvement Plan
- to indicate the progress made in meeting agreed targets in appropriate areas
- to provide an evaluative summary of the quality of the work across a range of areas in the school
- to highlight strengths and identify priorities for next year

Background Information:

Mearns Castle High School is a large non-denominational secondary school set in Newton Mearns in East Renfrewshire. The Mearns Castle cluster consists of one partner Nursery School, Hazeldene Nursery and four partner Primary Schools:- Mearns (shared with Eastwood High School), Kirkhill, Eaglesham and Calderwood Lodge. The latter is a Jewish Primary school located in the Newlands area of Glasgow but linked to Mearns Castle,

Our school roll is currently 1311 and with a staying on rate of well over 90% we maintain high numbers in our senior school.

The school is fully staffed with 108 teachers and 30 support staff. We also benefit from a dynamic Parent Council which takes an active interest in promoting and supporting the school. Together we work in partnership with staff from a range of support agencies to ensure the highest quality educational experience for our pupils.

Our school has an excellent reputation for high levels of academic achievement as well as wide-ranging and successful extra-curricular activities. We pride ourselves on providing an inclusive education for all of our pupils and we are committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve their full potential. We work hard as a School community to successfully deliver our shared vision for our school.

In 2009 The Sunday Times Newspaper awarded the school the accolade of Scottish State Secondary School of the Year, stating that “Based on the school’s high levels of attainment and achievement, and its track record of striving for continual improvement, Mearns Castle deservedly wins Scottish State Secondary School of the Year.”

Mearns Castle High School Servitium

Our Vision

The Mearns Castle High School community will work together to sustain a safe, inclusive and high quality learning environment that enables us to develop fully our capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society.

Our Vision, based on our Values, will be realised through the achievement of Our Aims

Our Values

- Respect:** show self-respect and be considerate of the needs, wishes and feelings of others.
- Inclusion:** treat all people fairly and enable them to feel included.
- Integrity:** be honest and sincere.
- Responsibility:** be accountable for your actions and make a positive contribution to society.
- Ambition:** show a pride in your school and have high expectations of what you can achieve.
- Achievement:** be enthusiastic and show a determination to succeed in all you do.

Our Aims

We will be motivated and enthusiastic in our learning and teaching and determined to reach the highest standards of attainment and achievement.

We will be confident and ambitious, build positive relationships and pursue a healthy and active lifestyle.

We will show initiative and be enterprising, creative and responsible citizens.

We will show respect for others, care for our environment and make a positive contribution to society.

Our Main Priorities for 2009-10

- Continue to raise attainment for all pupils
- Develop our curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence
- Continue to improve the quality of Learning and Teaching
- Develop further our arrangements for raising attainment and recognising achievement
- Develop further our arrangements for the Care, Welfare and Development of our pupils
- Establish a culture of self-evaluation that is focussed on improving Learning and Teaching
- Develop further the capacity of all staff in the school as leaders of learning

As will be demonstrated through the details of this Report we successfully achieved all of our Targets for Session 2009-2010

Methods of Gathering Evidence:

The evaluative judgements made throughout the Report are based on evidence gathered from the following sources:

- Systematic analysis of SQA, National Assessment and Standardised Test attainment data at both school and Cluster level
- Systematic analysis of other key performance data e.g. finance, attendance, exclusion, SLDR
- Systematic evaluation of performance against Local Authority targets
- Regular meetings of School Teams at all levels including SLT, ELT, Faculty and Departmental Teams and School Improvement Teams including meeting minutes
- SLT link arrangements with Faculties/Departments
- Regular meetings between Head Teacher and Teachers' Representatives
- Systematic reviews of School and Faculty/Department Improvement Plans
- Systematic use of HGIOS 3 and Journey to Excellence self-evaluation documentation
- Extensive programme of lesson observations based on HGIOS 3 QIs
- Informal and formal consultation with staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders
- Staff involvement in PRD programme
- Regular consultation with Parent Council
- Investors in People, East Renfrewshire High Schools Assessment Report May 2010

Section 1

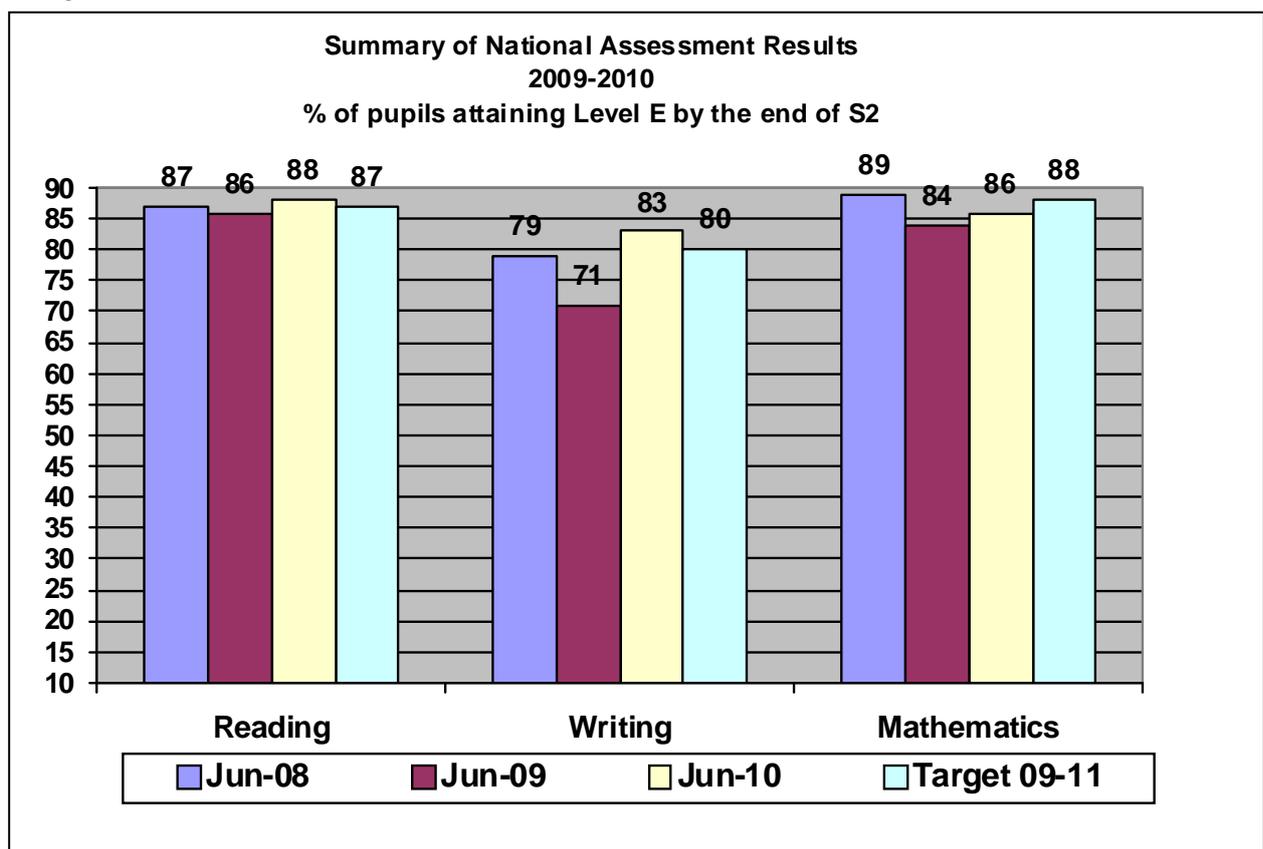
How good are we at raising the attainment and achievement of our pupils? (How Good is Our School QI 1.1)

Raising Attainment

As a result of the effective implementation of our 2009-2010 Improvement Plan, as can be seen from the data in the graphs below, we continue to successfully raise the attainment of our pupils as measured by their improved performance in National Assessments and the 2010 SQA examinations. In some categories the results are the best the school has produced to date. Our performance continues to be 'very good' in this area.

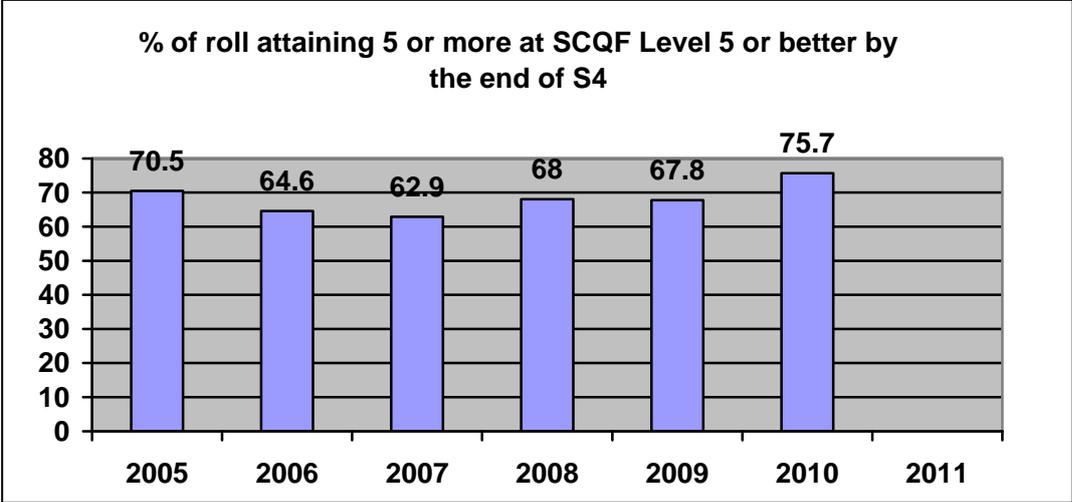
As can be seen from Graph 1, our pupils are performing to a high level in National Assessments. By the end of S2 the proportion attaining Level E, in Mathematics, is consistently high but falls just short of our target. In Reading and Writing, however, we have exceeded our targets, with a substantial improvement in the quality of performance in Writing, compared to last session.

Graph 1



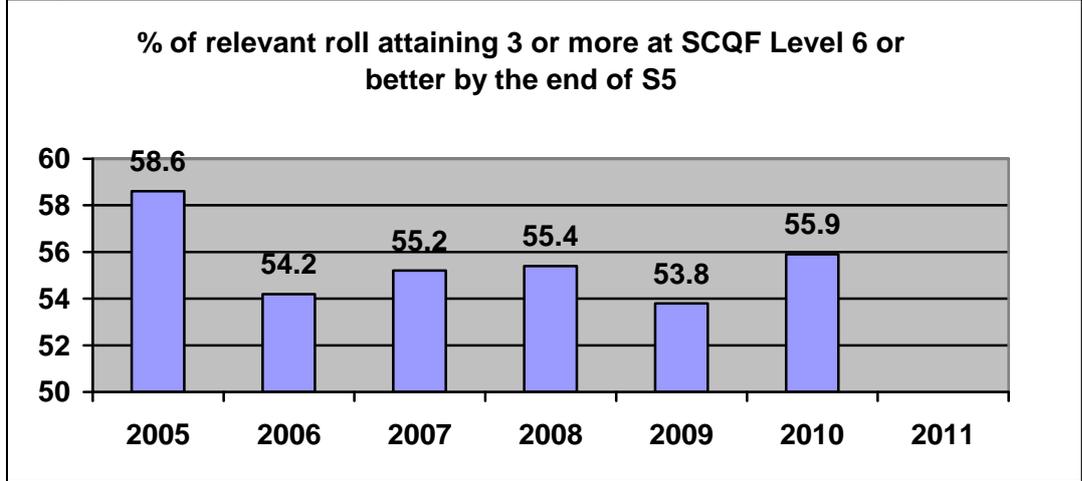
Graph 2 illustrates a substantially increased level of performance in Intermediate 2 examinations. We are pleased with our improved performance in 2010, as this was an area of priority, identified in our Improvement Plan 2009-2010. This is our best performance to date in this indicator.

Graph 2

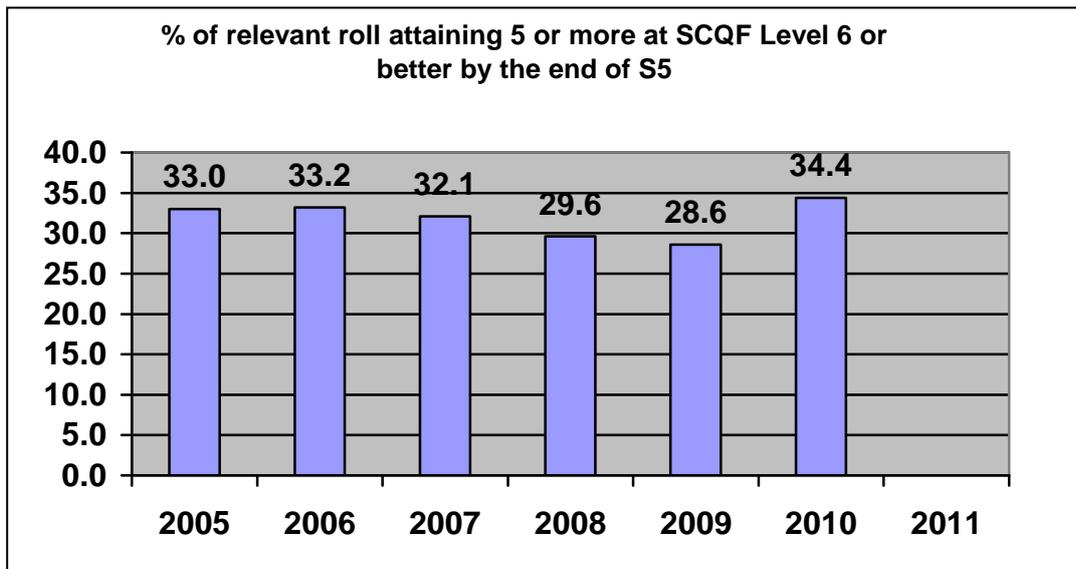


Similarly Graphs 3 and 4 demonstrate an increased level of performance by our pupils in Higher examinations. As can be seen from Graph 3 the proportion of our S5 pupils achieving 3 or more Highers is back on an upward trend. Graph 4 illustrates a substantially increased level of performance in the proportion of our S5 pupils achieving 5 or more Highers. This is our best performance to date in this indicator. We are particularly pleased with our improved performance at Higher level in 2010 as this was a key area of priority identified in our Improvement Plan 2009-2010.

Graph 3

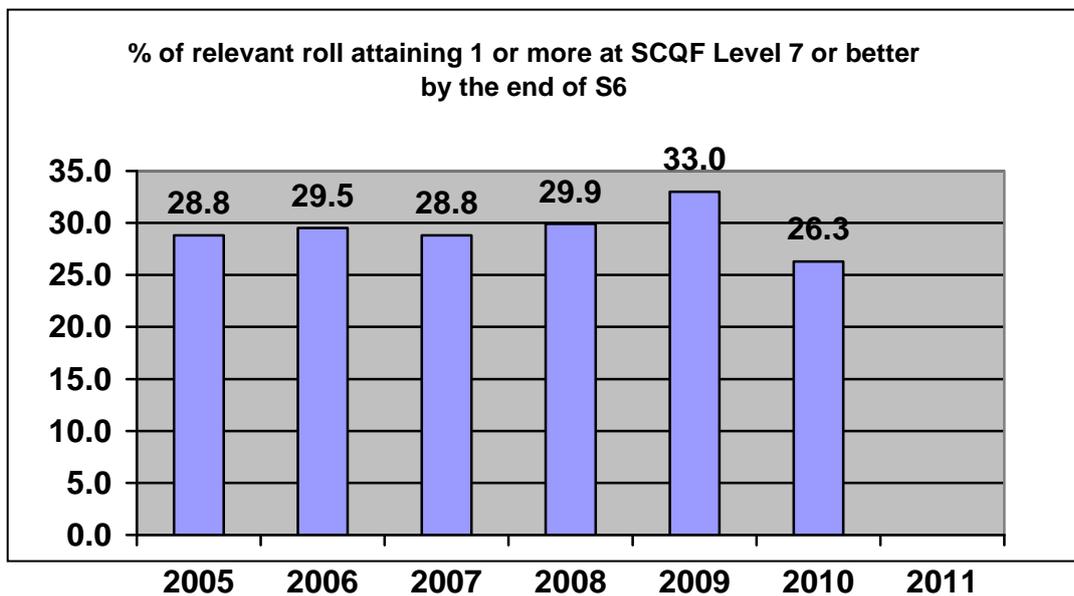


Graph 4



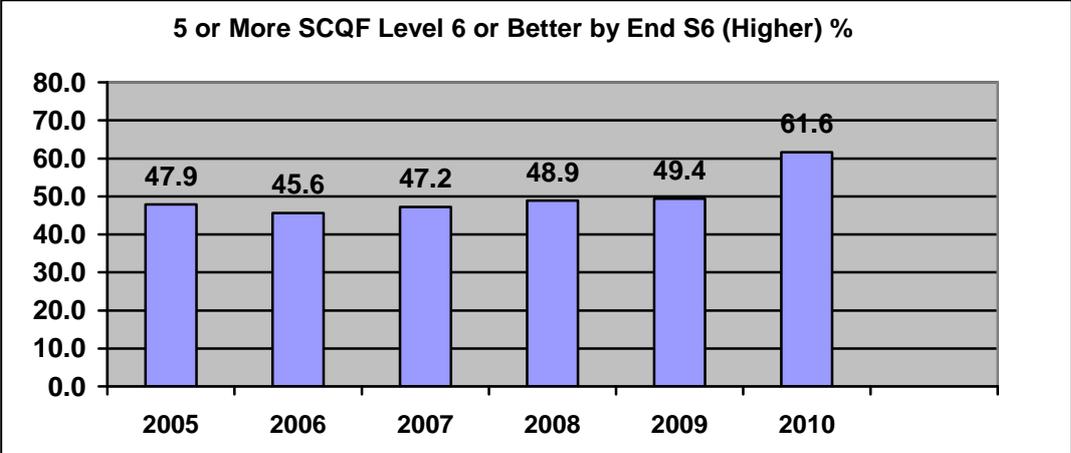
Graph 5 illustrates a slight dip in the performance of our S6 pupils at Advanced Higher level in 2010. This is perhaps not surprising given our slightly disappointing performance at Higher level in 2009.

Graph 5



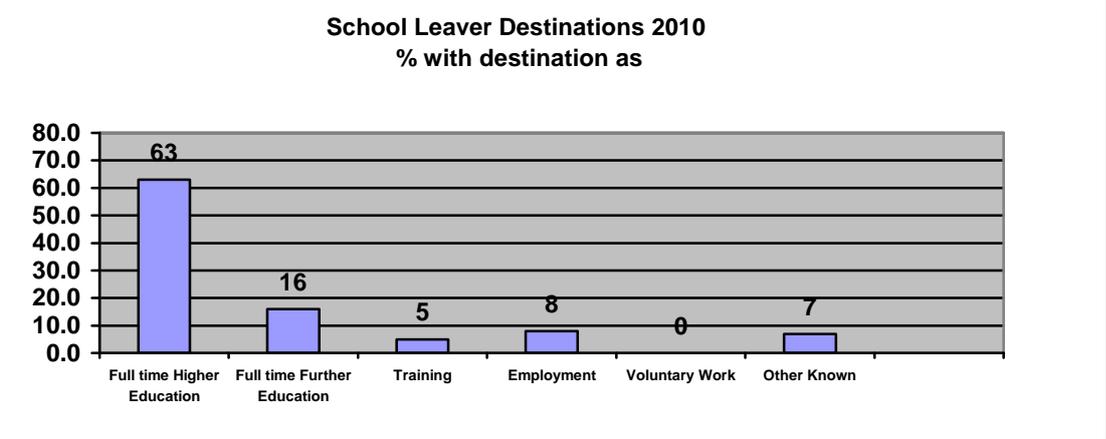
As can be seen from Graph 6, however, the proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more Highers by the end of S6 increased substantially in 2010. This indicates that our S6 pupils produced a very strong performance at Higher Level in 2010. Again, by some way, this is our best performance to date in this indicator.

Graph 6



As can be seen from Graph 7 these impressive examination results contribute to the positive destinations achieved by our pupils on leaving school, with almost 80% moving on to Further or Higher education and 100% in a positive destination of some sort.

Graph 7



Following on from this very strong performance in the 2010 SQA Examinations it seems appropriate to reiterate the comment from the Education Department’s Quality Improvement Service in 2009.

“At SCQF levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 at S4, S5 and S6 the school (again) performed much better than its comparator schools and was often the top performing school”.
 ERC Education Department, Quality Improvement Service.
 Mearns Castle Cluster Transitions Review April 2009.

Raising Achievement

Raising achievement was identified as a key strength of our school by the Education Department's Quality Improvement Team in April 2009. Yet again this session our pupils, encouraged, supported and challenged by our staff and parents, have excelled in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular fields.

We ran more than 20 extra-curricular clubs for our pupils involving a similar number of staff and over 400 pupils. Sixteen of our pupils were awarded the ERC Convenor's Award for Outstanding Achievement in a wide range of fields.

In sport, eight S6 pupils working with our Campus Police officer, himself a former senior referee, successfully achieved a qualification in football refereeing. Most of the pupils are now employed as referees by the SFA on a regular basis. Our Junior and Senior Boys' Volleyball teams both reached the Scottish Schools' finals. Our athletes also won a number of medals, including our first ever Gold Medal at the Scottish Schools' Athletics finals and Pentathlon and Relay finals. Pupils also represented the school in the Scottish Schools' Swimming Championships and, quite uniquely, the British Schools' Karting finals. Pupils also participated and had considerable success at national, and indeed international levels, in a range of other sports including cheerleading, rugby, dance, martial arts and life-saving. Other pupils were selected to represent Scotland in volleyball, athletics, martial arts, chess, rugby and basketball. One pupil achieved fourth place in World Scottish Country Dancing Championships and another is currently a member of the British Paralympic Development squad for swimming. We have introduced a Sporting Hall of Fame to celebrate the sporting achievements of both former and current pupils and staff.

In the field of enterprise a group of pupils from S2-S5 were involved in the Scottish Homecoming Banners project, which culminated in the design of banners that now adorn the school. A group of S2 pupils won the ERC Design Award for re-branding a building. Our S1-S2 Enterprise Group, 'Cre8' won the Best Presentation award in the ERC Enterprise finals. Our S6 Young Enterprise team 'Statement' won the same category of award at the YES area finals and also achieved third place in the Renfrewshire Trade Fair. All of the 'Statement' team also passed the University of Strathclyde Business School examination. A group of S4 pupils were the winners of a prestigious Marketing Society of Scotland Gold Award.

Our pupils also excelled in the field of Performing Arts. A number of pupils had their work displayed as part of an ERC Art and Design exhibition. Many pupils also passed Associate Board Music Examinations in a range of instruments at a variety of levels. We hosted a very successful Winter Concert and School Show, 'The Sound of Music'. Our Concert Band won a Platinum Award at the Scottish Finals and followed that with a Gold Award at the National Finals. Two of our S6 pupils were invited to perform with the RSNO at a Masterclass Concert. Following our Winter Concert, a member of the local community commented "I was extremely impressed by the standard of music. All pupils should be congratulated on their excellent work

along with your staff in the Music Department, who are a very talented and motivated team". Another stated "It is quite an inspiration to see and hear the enthusiasm and inclusiveness generated by this activity".

Our citizenship work is another area of strength in the school. We made further progress in our quest for Eco-schools Green Flag status. We initiated a mobile phone recycling scheme. We also carried out a litter pick in the local area in partnership with the ERC Community Wardens. We also introduced the 'Golden Bin' challenge as a further strategy for tackling litter in the school. Our Eco-committee is working in partnership with Castle Nursery to develop an Eco Garden on an area of wasteland between the school and the nursery. Also two of our S4 pupils, who are British Council International Climate Champions, were involved in a conference with the then foreign secretary, David Milliband, to coincide with a climate change event in Kyoto. An S6 pupil won the Rotary club's Euroscola French Essay competition and subsequently took part in a trip to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. In partnership with local religious groups a team of S6 pupils organised an inter-faith event to raise awareness of different religious beliefs. Over 100 pupils gained Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver awards and a group of S5 pupils participated in a World Team Challenge expedition to Malawi, as part of their Gold award.

Our success in the field of debating continues. Not only did we enter an increased number of teams in more competitions but we were invited to participate in the prestigious Glasgow University Union and Oxford Union debates, as well as the St Andrew's Day debate, held in the Scottish Parliament. In addition, an S6 pupil was selected to represent Scotland in the World Debating Championships in October. The Head of ESU Scotland said that our debaters were "a wonderful example of the stimulating ethos that Mearns Castle provides".

Our impressive tradition of charity fund-raising continued. Staff raised a total of £1200 for three different charities throughout the session, in addition to which our Campus Police Officer raised money for a cancer charity, by participating in the Movember fund-raising initiative. Prompted by the pupils, the school community raised £2673 towards Haiti earthquake relief. In addition, we also contributed £2800 and 57 backpacks to the Mary's Meals charity work in Malawi. The group of S5 pupils who visited Malawi then distributed the backpacks to school children in a rural school. We raised £500 for St Vincent Hospice in Howwood. We also continued our long term fund-raising partnership with the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice. We were involved in raising more than £20,000 for the hospice through our Christmas Concert in the Silverburn Centre, and our participation in 'The Hottest Night of the Year', hosted by Charan Gill.

Finally, as well as a range of newsletters, assemblies and award ceremonies, we have a 'Colours' scheme as a strategy for recognising pupil achievements in areas such as those described above. The number of pupils achieving and wearing 'Colours' currently stands at over 100 and continues to increase. It is with great pride we see them wearing their braiding and Colours ties around the school.

Section 2

How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders? (How Good is Our School QI 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2)

How good is the quality of our pupils' learning experience? (How Good is Our School QI 2.1)

As a school and cluster we dedicated a considerable amount of time and resources, this session, to developing our curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence. All curricular areas developed their S1 courses, based on Curriculum for Excellence Experiences, Outcomes and Skills, in readiness for introducing them for S1 pupils in August 2010. This work incorporated the dimensions of Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing. In addition, as a Cluster, we successfully developed a Broad Skills Planner for the Curriculum for Excellence Technologies curricular area, to be incorporated into the Local Authority's catalogue of Curriculum for Excellence Skills Planners. The Planner will be shared with other Clusters, within the Local Authority, to support them in taking forward their work in Technologies.

A key target in our Improvement Plan 2009–2010 was to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the school. In particular, we continued to focus on the further development of AifL and Enterprise Strategies. We were also committed to introducing more opportunities for pupils to experience personalisation, choice and independent learning. In addition, we endeavoured to further develop the use of ICT in lessons. In particular, we developed our use of GLOW, as a learning and teaching resource. During the session we committed a lot of time and resources, in Departments and across the school, to developing our learning and teaching methodologies and to sharing good practice with colleagues.

An extensive programme of lesson observation, by the Senior Leadership Team, covering 55 lessons in S5 across all subjects, confirmed for us that the quality of teaching and pupils' learning experiences was very good, and in many instances, excellent. This was further endorsed by the reports from the lesson observation programmes that took place in subject Faculties and Departments and a wide ranging programme of Probationer observations.

We also developed further, this session, opportunities for pupils to be involved in interdisciplinary learning. Some departments focussed on lessons on the theme of 'Charity', around our Charities Week, and thereafter there was a focus on the Homecoming theme, around St Andrew's Day. In addition, all of our S1 pupils participated in the Rapid Response interdisciplinary event.

In addition to our work on improving learning and teaching, we continued to improve our Behaviour Management procedures and further develop our UPBEAT Scheme, focussing on promoting, recording, celebrating and rewarding positive behaviour. It is very encouraging to note that during this session over 90% of our pupils remained 'On Colour', at all times. In addition, over 700 pupils participated in a variety of events in our first UPBEAT Activities Day Out, at the end of June.

From questionnaire evidence 95% of staff take the view that all pupils participate well in their learning. One teacher commented, "Teaching in Mearns Castle has been a very positive experience. I have felt involved in many strategies to support and improve personal success for the young people".

We also consulted over 300 pupils, from S1-S6, on their learning experiences and more than 98% stated that they were happy to be a pupil at Mearns Castle High School. One pupil stated, "When I first came into the school I was very nervous and shy about certain subjects and now I am confident. I was also very scared about making new friends but the school has been very good in the process of me making more friends from different backgrounds and cultures." Another added, "I really enjoy being a pupil at Mearns Castle High because it is a really fun school to learn in and there is always something fun going on. The teachers that I have always push me to do the very best I can do! I would like to be able to stay in the school to the end of S6".

These sentiments are confirmed by the views of parents. Of the 350 who responded to our consultation, more than 99% declared themselves happy with the school. A parent of an S6 pupil commented, "Mearns Castle is an excellent school. It is well led by all the teaching and support staff. My daughter has always felt cared for and supported. I have found everyone to be highly motivated, very committed, attentive and responsible. Keep doing what you are doing – it works!"

How actively involved are parents and carers in the life of the school? (How Good is Our School QI 2.2)

We have a very active Parent Council and PTA both of which make an important contribution to the life of the school. Our PTA arranged a variety of social and fund-raising events and ultimately made a valuable contribution to the ethos and the resources of the school. The Parent Council meets six times per session and the meetings are well attended. Members of the Council recently participated in a consultation to shape the school's Vision, Values and Aims. In addition, they have been involved in a self-evaluation task on Parental Involvement, using Dimension 6 of Journey to Excellence. The results of this work helped to inform the school's Improvement Planning process. They were also consulted on the school's draft Improvement Plan 2010-2011, before the plan was finalised.

Our parents participate well in relevant meetings and school events. Almost all parents attend their child's Parents' Meeting. In addition, well over 200 parents attended three Curriculum and Revision information evenings, for parents of pupils in S3, S5 and S6. A specific Parents' Information Evening was also arranged for parents of pupils in S3 with Additional Support Needs. This was also very well attended, as was our Open Evening, for parents of S1 pupils, and our Transition Information Evening, for parents of P7 pupils. In addition, we have an active Adult Mentor programme, to support some of our most vulnerable young people.

Based on the target in our Improvement Plan, we introduced Tracking Reports for pupils in all year groups, this session. These were very well received by parents, indeed a parent of an S6 pupil commented, "I think the new Tracking Report system is an excellent idea, as it gives more regular feedback to parents."

Almost 100% of school staff take the view that parents are fully involved in the school and their child's education.

We have also consulted extensively with parents on their views of the school. Almost all parents of P7 pupils are satisfied with our P7-S1 transition arrangements. Based on 350 questionnaires, returned from parents of pupils in all year groups, more than 90% of parents agreed that the school asked for their views. In addition, 95% of parents stated that the school kept them well informed about their child's progress.

From survey evidence, our families are very satisfied with the quality of education we provide. Based on 350 questionnaires, returned from parents of pupils in S1-S6, more than 99% stated that they are happy with the school. One set of parents sent us a card that stated, "Congratulations on your Best State School in Scotland Award. It is only too rare that hard work and dedication, in education, is recognised. Well done to all at Mearns Castle."

How actively involved are staff in the life of the school? (How Good is Our School QI 3.1)

Our staff are motivated and committed professionals who make very effective contributions, individually and in teams, to the life of the school.

In addition to working together to provide our pupils with high quality learning experiences, staff are also very committed to offering an extensive menu of extra-curricular clubs and events, as evidenced by the wide range of pupil achievements referred to earlier in this report. They also, as stated earlier, work very effectively with each other and with pupils and parents in the field of charity fund-raising.

Along with other stakeholders all teaching and support staff were fully consulted on our Values, Visions and Aims with a view to finalising our shared vision for the school. 85% of teaching staff stated that they were actively involved in this process. Our shared vision was then launched and implemented with the school community later in the session.

Staff are also committed to developing their own learning through continuing professional development. All staff participate in our PRD programme. Our CPD budget was fully allocated and our in-house CPD programme, which this session featured 15 courses offered by a range of staff, was again very well attended. In fact almost 90% of teaching staff agreed that they had good opportunities to take part in continuing professional development.

Our In Service days and Collegiate meetings this session covered a range of topics crucial to the improvement of the school. A great deal of time was given over at

Cluster, School and Departmental level to moving forward our work on Curriculum for Excellence, particularly in relation to Skills development and Assessment. We concluded our consultation on Vision, Values and Aims. We also focussed on Leading Learning and Opening Up Learning and staged a very successful Learning and Teaching Conference, where staff shared best practice. Time was also given over to self-evaluation using Journey to Excellence at SLT, ELT and Faculty/Departmental level.

The Senior Leadership Team were involved in training on Professional Learning Communities, delivered by Ian Smith of Learning Unlimited. In addition, we staged a Conference for our Pupil Support Assistants that featured a range of input from specialist staff.

Over 90% of staff stated that the programme of In Service Days and Collegiate activity contributed to their professional development. 100% of staff agreed that the programme of activities contributed to departmental and school improvement. One member of staff commented about our Learning and Teaching Conference, "A very worthwhile day. Enjoyable, informative and inspiring. Confirmed for me, yet again, what a positive and enthusiastic staff we have here at Mearns Castle."

All staff are regularly consulted on a range of different aspects of the work of the school, including the School Improvement Plan. Indeed, more than 80% of all staff stated that they were actively involved in setting priorities to improve the school.

More than 90% of teaching staff stated that they had regular opportunities to help shape the curriculum through staff discussion and working groups. More than 55 staff are committed to being active members of a range of school Improvement Teams. These teams made a vital contribution to the success of a range of targets in the School Improvement Plan.

As an acknowledgement of the collegiate involvement and development of our staff the school was awarded an Investors in People Bronze Award.

How successful are we in our engagement with the local Community? (How Good is Our School QI 4.1)

We are very committed to Partnership working with our Cluster Schools. We have very positive relationships in our Cluster and we continue to make impressive progress in our Cluster working. This session we had six Cluster Improvement Teams, all of which made an important contribution to improving the pupils' experience across our schools. In addition, we were involved with our Cluster partners in an Active Schools Group, led by our Active Schools Manager. As part of our Transitions process our S1 pupils write a letter to named pupils in our Cluster Primary Schools to welcome them to the school. In addition, our S6 pupils visit their Primary Schools to talk to P7 pupils about their experience of Mearns Castle. Following one such visit a primary colleague wrote, "Thank you for sending us such fabulous students. They spoke brilliantly, were very pleasant and chatty and did a great job with the kids."

Our pupils are actively involved in the Local Community yet again. This session 100% of our S4 pupils successfully participated in our work experience programme.

Over 85% of pupils stated that they both enjoyed and benefitted from their work experience and 90% wanted a certificate to mark their experience.

In addition, S5 and S6 pupils participated in work experience relevant to their continuing education or future career choice.

Through our Community Involvement programme, S6 pupils take part in a range of community placements, including in our Partner Primary Schools. Our charity work also allows us to work in partnership with our local community. We recently started working with the clothing recycling company Recatex which results in an ongoing contribution to the Local Authority's Malawi charity. In particular, we work in close partnership with the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice, with whom we have a very close and ongoing fund-raising relationship. Our pupils were involved in the Voices for Hospices fund-raising concert. In addition, our pupils visit the Hospice to entertain and engage with the residents.

Through our Eco-schools work we arranged a litter pick in conjunction with the Community Wardens. We are also working in partnership with Castle Nursery to develop an Eco garden next to the school. Maxwell Mearns Church also runs the Basement Club for our pupils one lunchtime per week. Our S6 pupils also organised our annual visit from the Blood Transfusion bus. On this occasion they collected 38 pints. Other S6 pupils also organised a very successful Inter-faith event in which representatives from a wide range of faiths and religious groups hosted workshops for our senior pupils.

Our Campus Police Officer continues to make an excellent contribution both in the school and across the Cluster. As well as making important contributions to our PSE and Citizenship programmes, he also led a group of senior pupils through their Football Referee examinations, to allow them to qualify as referees. His appointment has been a very valuable addition to the Mearns Castle Cluster team and he has made an important contribution to the high quality of education experienced by our pupils.

Representatives of local organisations are also frequently involved in the life of the school. We have an extensive programme of speakers, including for example, 'Medics Against Violence', who support the delivery of our Citizenship programme, particularly in the senior school. We also have community coaches who support our extra-curricular sports provision in areas such as cheerleading.

We have a group of mentors who work closely with some individual pupils and a specific mentor who works very closely, each year, with our very successful Young Enterprise Team.

Yet again, we hosted a very successful Careers Evening for pupils and parents, with representatives of approximately 50 employers and Further and Higher Education institutions in attendance. The event was attended by around 200 families who regarded it universally as 'well organised', 'well worth the time' and 'very informative'.

and enjoyable'. The delegates also commented on our 'well-prepared students' and that it was an 'excellent event with lots of high quality enquiries'.

Our Higher Psychology course is delivered by a lecturer from Cardonald College and the SQA examination results continue to be impressive.

In the evening and at weekends the school building and playing fields also function as a community resource and host a range of sports clubs and other community events.

We continue to be delighted that when surveyed on this issue almost 100% of parents took the view that 'The school has a good reputation in the local community'.

How successful are we in our engagement with the wider Community? (How Good is Our School QI 4.2)

Yet again, this session, we were successful in developing a range of partnerships with our wider community.

We were the only Scottish Schools Cluster to be invited by the British Council, to be involved in their prestigious Connecting Classrooms Project. We are involved in developing a learning partnership with a cluster of schools in Delhi, India. Delegates from the Delhi schools visited the Mearns Castle cluster, earlier in the session, to signal the start of a three year programme in which our pupils and staff will share and develop an awareness of each other's culture. One of our Indian visitors stated, "It was a pleasure meeting you. Thank you very much for the courtesy extended to us during our visit. I really appreciate you for being such a gracious host and treating us so royally. Look forward to your visit to India." In addition, we hosted a Head Teacher from a high school in America, who made a presentation to pupil assemblies, to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

Our work in the field of Enterprise Education has been, and continues to be, sector leading and has been recognised by the HMIE. Following on from our Homecoming Scotland work and being finalists in the Scottish Education Awards, the quality of our work in this area was further acknowledged when we were invited to host a stand at Learning and Teaching Scotland's Homecoming Village, at the Scottish Learning Festival.

Through our Duke of Edinburgh Programme a large number of senior students have participated in expeditions in Scotland. A group of S5 pupils were involved in a World Team Challenge expedition, to Malawi, where they developed further our partnership with the charity Mary's Meals. In addition, we had a large number of students involved in trips to a variety of destinations in Britain and Europe.

We have many staff involved in Local Authority Improvement Teams. Teachers and pupils, in our PE Department, were invited by the University of Strathclyde to be involved in a research project entitled 'Factors that impact on pupils' participation in secondary school PE'. In addition, a number of staff work at a national level with Learning and Teaching Scotland, the SQA and HMIE. We were also involved in the development of the National Assessment Resource for Curriculum for Excellence.

How good is our Leadership? (How Good is Our School QI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4)

Vision, Values and Aims (How Good is Our School QI 9.1)

This session we completed our wide ranging consultation on our Vision, Values and Aims with all our stakeholders. The results of this consultation were formulated into an agreed and shared vision for the school, which features on page two of this report. Our shared Vision, Values and Aims were then launched, publicised and implemented with the whole school community.

Our Vision, Values and Aims will serve as framework will serve as a framework to review the work of the school, implement improvements and shape our future direction.

Leadership and Direction (How Good is Our School QI 9.2)

The work of the school is guided by the School and Departmental Improvement Plans and the central focus of this documentation is the improvement of teaching and learning in the school. The School Improvement Plan is subject to extensive consultation with our stakeholders prior to agreement. When finally agreed, the details of the Plan are shared with the same groups. The School Plan forms the basis for Departmental Plans and other priorities in the school.

The focus of learning and teaching is central to the work of leaders in the school, who are involved in an extensive programme of lesson observations across and within departments, stimulating self-evaluation, using coaching strategies to facilitate effective and valuable dialogue and employing a range of strategies through which to share good practice within and between departments and faculties. In addition, the areas for improvement identified through this work, are incorporated into future plans to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the school.

As mentioned earlier in this report we dedicated a substantial amount of collegiate time, this session, to a consideration of issues around Opening Up Learning and the Leadership of Learning. Our Learning and Teaching Improvement Team also has a central role to play in this area. As previously mentioned they organised a very successful Learning and Teaching conference, aimed at sharing best practice. We also have an extensive programme of in-house CPD which, as well as encouraging and supporting the further development of teaching methodologies, has allowed staff opportunities for leadership roles beyond the classroom.

Developing People and Partnerships (How Good is Our School QI 9.3)

There is a commitment in our school to work in a consultative and collegiate manner. All teaching staff are fully consulted on the school's Working Time Agreement which allows staff to organise their time to best meet the needs of the school and of school improvement.

Both Senior Leadership and the Extended Leadership Team meet on a regular basis, as do Faculty and Department Teams. We practise a model of distributive and consultative leadership in which more than 50 members of staff are actively involved in School Improvement Teams and other initiatives. In addition un-promoted staff regularly participate in Extended Leadership Team meetings. They are also involved in shadowing the Pupil Support Team as well as mentoring Probationer Teachers and Students. Two Depute Head Teachers are currently involved in the Flexible Route to Headship programme.

In addition, staff are regularly consulted on a wide range of issues. We also publish a weekly Staff newsletter in which staff achievements are recognised and celebrated.

More than 95% of staff share the view that staff communicate effectively with each other. The same proportion state that they have regular appointments to help shape the curriculum, by having staff discussions and working groups. Almost 100% of staff said they regularly discuss how to improve achievement of all pupils at both stage and whole-school level.

Leadership of Improvement and Change (How Good is Our School QI 9.4)

Leaders in the school are committed to maintaining a high level of quality and promoting continuous improvement and excellence in educational provision for our pupils.

The Local Authority's Education Department, in the Cluster Transitions Review Report of April 2009, judged the school's performance as 'very good' in all areas. In session 2009-2010, therefore, we decided to benchmark our performance against the standard for excellence. We have embarked on a three year self-evaluative programme, to benchmark our performance against the ten dimensions of The Journey to Excellence. As a school, we considered four of the ten dimensions, last session. We will use four more, in session 2010-2011, and the final two, in session 2011-2012. It is our intention that on completion of this task, if not before, our school performance will be excellent in every dimension.

We are delighted that our parents take a positive view of leadership in the school, with 97% expressing the view that "The school is well led".

What is our capacity for Improvement? (How Good is Our School QI 10)

In the Local Authority's Cluster Transitions Review Report, of April 2009, both the school and the Cluster were judged to be 'very good', that is has having 'major strengths' in the educational experience we provide for our pupils. Again, at both school and cluster level, our capacity for improvement was also judged as 'very good'. We are very confident, from the evidence shared in this report, that we have now improved from this position and that we have the capacity to improve further.

We believe that we have all the ingredients, a clear and shared vision for the school, talented, hard working and motivated staff and pupils, active, caring and supportive parents, positive and successful partnership arrangements, a supportive Education Department, and very effective and committed leadership to ensure that we will continue to improve the school and achieve our goal of excellence in everything we do.

Our main priorities for session 2010 -2011, as we continue to strive towards attaining our goal of excellence in every dimension, are as follows:

- Develop our curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence
- Continue to improve the quality of Learning and Teaching
- Develop further our current strategies for raising attainment and recognising and celebrating achievement
- Improve the effectiveness of parental involvement in learning
- Establish a culture of self-evaluation that is focussed on improving Teaching and Learning
- Develop further our arrangements for the Care, Welfare and Development of our pupils.

More details, on each of these priorities, can be found in our Improvement Plan 2010-2011, which is available on the schools' website.

Dean Smith
Head Teacher

November 2010