



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

**Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Ballee Community High School
Ballymena**

November 2011

FOLLOW-UP TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION OF BALLEE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL, BALLYMENA, BT42 2HS (321-0233)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a standard inspection of Ballee Community High School in the week of 25 January 2010 and as a result the school entered the formal intervention process on 11 March 2010. The Department of Education indicated at that time that a follow-up inspection would take place and that, in the interim, a follow-up visit would evaluate the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements.

The standard inspection in January 2010 highlighted strengths in:

- the good quality of the pastoral care;
- the commitment to inclusion, including the improved behaviour and attendance of the pupils, and the reduction in the number of suspensions and pupils educated off-site;
- the positive impact of the work done by the teachers to improve the climate for learning for the pupils, coupled with the improvements in the physical learning environment; and
- the good use made of external links and partnerships.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to raise the overall standards across the school, including the unsatisfactory levels of attainment in public examinations;
- to raise the expectations of the teachers and the pupils, match more closely the learning and teaching strategies to the abilities and interests of the pupils, and improve the provision in English, mathematics and science; and
- to improve the quality of leadership throughout the school, and for the governors to support the Principal to review and re-define the roles and leadership responsibilities of all members of the senior leadership team (SLT) in light of the current needs of the school.

The quality of the provision in English, mathematics, science and special educational needs (SEN) was evaluated as inadequate.

After the action plan was received an initial visit was carried out by inspectors on 2 July 2010, as a result of which the action plan was adjusted. An interim follow-up visit took place on 8 December 2010.

In the interval since the original inspection the school has received extensive support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service of the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB), and the following changes which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the enrolment has decreased further and currently stands at 270;
- following the reconstitution of the Board of Governors (governors), two successive new chairpersons have been appointed;

- there have been a significant number of staffing issues and restructuring which include:
 - numerous changes and long-term absences in the English and mathematics departments,
 - a continuing vacancy in the post of head of mathematics,
 - the retirement of a member of the SLT,
 - recently-agreed changes and clarification in the roles and responsibilities of members of the SLT,
 - the internal appointment of a head of information and communication technology and a teacher-in-charge of examinations,
 - and the appointment of three temporary teachers and one full-time teacher; and;
- the school has adopted recently, with significant support from the NEELB, a multidisciplinary approach towards addressing the complex social, emotional and behaviour needs of the some of the pupils.

The following are the most important improvements since the inspection:

- the examination entry policy has been reviewed and the proportion of year 12 pupils being entered for five or more General Certificates in Secondary Education (GCSEs) has increased from 67% to 81%;
- the proportion of pupils leaving year 12 and going on to further education, training or employment has risen from 73% to 81%;
- the school has developed appropriate systems for target-setting, monitoring and tracking and mentoring the pupils in years 11 and 12;
- the overall quality of the provision for SEN has improved and is now satisfactory;
- a common approach towards short-term planning for learning has been adopted recently by all of the teachers; and
- the Principal is monitoring and evaluating more closely the quality of learning and teaching in order to bring about improvement.

The overall levels of attainment in public examinations remain unsatisfactory. Since the original inspection, the improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C has not been sustained.

In 2011, 17.4% of the pupils attained five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, and 6.5% attained five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics at grades A*-C; these results remain considerably below the NI average for similar non-selective schools.

At grades A*-C, approximately three-quarters of the GCSE subjects over the past three years remain more than ten percentage points below the corresponding NI averages.

Furthermore, across the school, the standard of the pupils' work in their books is not high enough. As identified in the original inspection, the pupils' social skills, their ability to communicate and their self-esteem and confidence need to improve. At the time of the follow-up inspection, in the lessons observed the behaviour of a minority of the pupils across the school was disruptive showing a lack of respect for their teachers and peers.

During the follow-up inspection the quality of the teaching observed ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. Over one-half of the lessons were good or better which demonstrates an improving profile in the quality of the teaching. In these lessons, the teachers managed well the behaviour of the pupils and there were appropriate levels of engagement in learning. However, the remaining lessons had important areas for improvement.

The reduction in the number of suspensions at the time of the original inspection has not been sustained; the number of suspensions has increased steadily from 12 in 2008/9 to 41 in 2010/11, with 27 in the first three months of the current academic year.

The quality of the provision in English and science remains inadequate; the quality of the provision in mathematics is now unsatisfactory.

Owing to the staff changes, the delay in agreeing roles and responsibilities across the SLT, and the previous lack of clarity surrounding roles pertaining to the strategic leadership of the curriculum and teaching and learning, progress has been slow in developing these aspects of the school improvement agenda; a higher priority needs to be given to the strategic development of the curriculum and teaching and learning in order to raise standards.

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school remains inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The follow-up inspection has identified continuing areas for improvement in leadership and management, and significant areas for improvement in standards and learning and teaching, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the pupils.

The areas for improvement are to:

- raise the overall standards across the school, including the unsatisfactory levels of attainment in public examinations;
- raise, more consistently across the school, the expectations of the teachers and of the pupils, and match more closely the learning and teaching strategies to the abilities and interests of the pupils;
- improve the provision in English, mathematics and science; and
- continue to improve the quality of leadership through, in particular, the SLT supporting the Principal to monitor and evaluate both the quality of the provision and the impact of the actions taken to promote improvement and raise standards.

It continues to be important that the employing authority, governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will carry out a further follow-up inspection within 12 months and a report will be published.

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