

eti

*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

**Larne Grammar School
Co Antrim**

May 2012

FOLLOW-UP TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION OF LARNE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, CO ANTRIM, BT40 1PQ (342-0046)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a standard inspection of Larne Grammar School in April 2010 when the quality of provision was evaluated as satisfactory. This inspection highlighted the following strengths: the hard-working and committed staff; the well-behaved pupils who engage willingly in their learning; the quality of the teaching observed, which was good in almost one-half of the lessons and very good in a further one-quarter; the standards achieved by the pupils, particularly at GCSE; the good progress made in reviewing the planning to reflect the curriculum at key stage (KS) 3; and the good pastoral care of the pupils.

The inspection identified the need to improve the leadership in the following key areas:

- by providing sharper, strategic direction to whole-school development issues and fostering a culture of self evaluation at all levels; in particular, to build and support the capacity of middle management to promote school improvement; and
- by developing better (two-way) communication between staff and senior management based on mutual respect and meaningful consultation to achieve better working relationships in the interests of the pupils and the welfare of the whole-school community.

The ETI carried out two monitoring visits, an initial follow-up inspection which took place in March 2012 and a second follow-up inspection on 10 and 11 May 2012.

At the time of the standard inspection, the school development plan (SDP) was not fully compliant with the statutory requirements as set out by the Department of Education. These shortcomings have now been addressed; the SDP has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings and has been reviewed to take account of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010. Furthermore, the action plan produced by the school in response to the inspection findings of the original inspection was of a good quality.

The following changes, which affect the work of the school, have taken place in the interval since the standard inspection: a new Vice-principal has been appointed and the senior leadership team (SLT) has been restructured; the school's 'Behaviour Management' system has been reviewed; and, training has been provided for all staff in the monitoring of pupil attendance, punctuality, behaviour management and academic progress.

The school has demonstrated evidence of improvement in some important areas since the standard inspection:

- the quality of the provision for music which was evaluated as satisfactory is now good;
- the review and clarification of roles and the increased level of accountability for middle managers ensures they develop action plans to guide improvement work, and monitor and review the provision within their areas of responsibility;
- the monitoring of pupil progress, within subjects and across year groups, and the implementation of a range of intervention strategies to address low and under-achievement; and

- the standards attained by the pupils at General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level have improved from below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools to above the NI average in the past two years.

In important aspects of leadership and management, including governance, there is insufficient improvement since the standard inspection and significant areas for improvement remain to be addressed if the welfare and needs of all of the pupils and the whole school community are to be met effectively:

- the school does not have in place important statutory policies and procedures, such as a policy for 'Promoting a Dignified Workplace'¹ and an associated code of conduct for staff, which are needed to govern the conduct and safeguard the welfare of all of the staff;
- poor working relationships between and among a significant minority of the teaching staff, the SLT and the governors of the school persist;
- the school's process of self-evaluation leading to improvement, is not making a significant impact on improving the overall quality of education in the school; it is not underpinned by rigorous analysis and interpretation of relevant qualitative and quantitative data, and insufficient cognisance is taken of all of the data available such as, for example but not limited to, a staff survey conducted in May 2011; and
- the quality of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) which was evaluated as satisfactory at the time of the standard inspection remains satisfactory; the current CEIAG programme lacks coherence, and important pupil data is not being made available to the teachers of the discrete careers classes to help inform their planning.

CONCLUSION

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided by the school remains satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision.

However, important aspects of strategic leadership and management, including governance, remain inadequate. There has been insufficient progress made by the school in most of the areas for improvement in the two year period between the original inspection and the follow-up inspection.

The main areas for improvement are for the SLT, including the Principal and the governors, to:

- develop appropriate and effective lines of communication in all aspects of the work of the school, and to commit fully to the development of an ethos that values openness, transparency, mutual respect and consultation;

¹ Teachers' Negotiating Committee 2005/2.

- put in place, adhere to and monitor robustly, statutory policies and practices to safeguard the welfare of all of the staff and to improve significantly the poor working relationships that exist between and among a significant minority of the teaching staff, the SLT and the governors; and
- develop the capacity of the SLT to self-evaluate in a realistic and robust manner which leads to improvement and is underpinned by effective analysis and interpretation of relevant qualitative and quantitative data.

It is important that the full Board of Governors take prompt and effective action to address the findings set out in this follow-up inspection report, and monitor closely and regularly the progress being made to bring about the necessary improvements.

The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the remaining areas for improvement, including the need to improve the quality of the provision for CEIAG, within 12 months.

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