



*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

**Newry High School
Co Down**

November 2012

FOLLOW-UP TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION OF NEWRY HIGH SCHOOL, CO DOWN, BT34 1QN (521-0186)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a standard inspection of Newry High School in the week of 4 October 2010. The quality of education provided by the school was evaluated as satisfactory, with the quality of leadership evaluated as unsatisfactory. The inspection highlighted strengths in the good standards achieved by the pupils in public exams, the hard work and commitment of the middle managers and the good quality of the provision for CEIAG.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in a number of key areas. These included the need to improve the unsatisfactory leadership in the school; the poor relationships and communication between the senior leadership team and staff; the unsatisfactory arrangements for safeguarding young people and the need for improvement in English, science, pastoral care and special educational needs.

Within six weeks of the inspection, the safeguarding arrangements were re-inspected and evaluated as satisfactory.

The ETI carried out a monitoring visit on 6 April 2011 and an interim follow-up visit (IFUV) between 23 and 25 January 2012. The IFUV identified that the school was partially addressing the key issues for improvement from the original inspection and that there was an urgent need to address the issue of the unsatisfactory leadership, which was inhibiting the school, as a whole, from engaging in the strategic planning necessary for improvement.

The remaining areas for improvement included important aspects of attainment generally, and in particular, in English and in science at post-16, the quality of teaching, the curricular provision and the roles, responsibilities and effectiveness of middle management.

A follow-up inspection (FUI) was carried out on 27 and 28 November 2012.

During the FUI, a representative of the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service of the Southern Education and Library Board reported to the ETI on the nature and extent of the support provided to the school in the interval since the original inspection. The acting Principal and the vice chair of governors both reported that the quality of support to the school and the governors was very good.

There have been a number of important improvements since the standard inspection in October 2010.

- The appointment of an acting Principal and an acting vice-principal has addressed the major issue of the unsatisfactory leadership of the school identified at the time of the original inspection. Their work has given clear direction and considerable energy to whole school improvement. Evidence from interviews with the ETI during the FUI and from recent questionnaires conducted within the school show a strong increase in commitment and collegiality amongst the staff, improved relationships, and a growing confidence and belief in the success of the school.
- The percentage of pupils achieving any five or more GCSE or equivalent subjects at grades A*-C has risen since the time of the original inspection by 18 percent to 57 percent, which is average for similar schools and, when GCSE English and mathematics are included, has risen by 12 percent to 41 percent, which is above the average. In both cases, standards have recovered to the levels which were being attained in 2008. The percentage of pupils achieving 3 or more A levels at grades A*-C has risen since the original inspection by 19 percent to 63 percent, which is well above the average for similar schools. While the overall standards in public examinations are positive, there is too much variation across all of the subjects at GCSE level; eight subjects (almost one-third) are 10% or more below the average for non-selective schools and a further three subjects are more than 5 percent below. In contrast, a further nine subjects are more than 5 percent above the average, six of which are more than 10 percent above.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care has improved from satisfactory to good. The staff has taken effective actions to introduce positive behaviour management strategies which are resulting in improving levels of pupil behaviour and a large reduction in the number of pupil suspensions. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the FUI, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people which reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.
- Eight permanent and temporary, middle management appointments, made since the time of the IFUV, have contributed to the clear vision and direction for school improvement. The post-holders are beginning to identify what needs to be achieved in the short and medium term and have started to provide the necessary leadership in their respective areas. For example, the use of assessment data to identify and respond to the needs of individual learners and to identify aspects of teaching which need to improve, continues to influence beneficially the work of the school.
- The recent changes in senior leadership, have led to renewed attention being given to curriculum provision, exam entry policies and the need to increase the access to courses offered within the area learning community. The FUI confirms that this is an appropriate priority.

While work is already underway, continued emphasis and effort is required on a number of important areas for improvement.

The quality of the teaching observed during the FUI ranged from inadequate to very good; two-thirds of the lessons observed were good or better while one-third were in need of improvement. Further progress is necessary to target more individually, the support given to those pupils who have special educational needs. While the teachers have begun to identify and share the more effective teaching approaches within and across subject departments, more opportunities need to be created to share examples of effective teaching more widely and successfully across all of the subject areas.

The Senior Leadership Team need to review the policies on curriculum and examination provision including the further development of courses through the area learning community links.

Option choices at Key Stage 4 (KS4) need to be reviewed. The uptake of GCSE English literature is unduly limited and the curricular provision and the examination entry policy for many of the pupils following science courses in KS4 are unsatisfactory. The numbers of pupils following the GCE A level courses in science are too low.

The quality of the provision for English and science remains satisfactory.

CONCLUSION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory overall.

There are a number of important strengths within the school including the good leadership being provided by the acting Principal and vice-principal in the current temporary arrangements; the good overall standards in public examinations; and a more positive and effective approach being adopted to engage and support the pupils in their learning.

The leadership issue has been addressed and under the direction of the acting Principal, the school now has clear direction for improvement and is building effectively, the capacity necessary across many of the staff. This is meeting the current needs of the school but in the medium to longer term, the governors need to appoint a permanent Principal and engage more comprehensively in monitoring and supporting the actions of the school to effect improvement.

ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress within the next 12 months.

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