



*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

**St Michael's Grammar School
Lurgan**

April 2014

A FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION OF ST MICHAEL'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL, LURGAN, CO ARMAGH, BT67 9JW (542-0056)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a standard inspection¹ of St Michael's Grammar School in March 2013 when the quality of provision was evaluated as inadequate. The school entered the formal intervention process on 25 April 2013. The areas for improvement identified in March 2013 were:

- raise the overall inadequate standards at GCSE and A-level;
- improve the quality of the learning, teaching and curriculum in order to meet better the needs of all the pupils; and
- provide effective strategic leadership at all levels to raise standards through a rigorous school development planning process.

An interim follow-up visit was carried out in November 2013 and a follow-up inspection in April 2014. A wide range of professional development support has been provided to the school since the original inspection by the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) of the Southern Education and Library Board. The principal, chair of governors and staff reported that the CASS support was of a high quality.

A number of key changes, which affect the work of the school, have taken place since March 2013. These include the review of the roles, responsibilities and working practices of the senior leadership team and the appointment of new middle managers with responsibility for science, health and social care, pastoral care and community relations, equality and diversity. The planned amalgamation of the school with St Mary's High School and St Paul's Junior High School has been approved.

During the follow-up inspection the quality of the learning and teaching observed ranged from good to outstanding, and in three-quarters of the lessons seen, it was very good or better. Effective practice was characterised by the teachers using assessment information consistently well to track the pupils' progress, building successfully on the pupils' prior learning and using skilful questioning techniques to develop the pupils' thinking and their responses. The pupils are engaged actively in learning through well-planned and purposeful paired and group work activities.

The most important improvements since March 2013 are:

- the significant increase in the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C in seven or more subjects at GCSE including English and mathematics, from 76.5% in 2012 to 95.1% in 2013 and the increase in the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-B in seven or more subjects at GCSE including English and mathematics, from 40.9% in 2012 to 60.8% in 2013, including addressing the variation in subjects;
- a small increase in the proportion of pupils attaining three A-level at grades A*-C to 64% which remains below average for similar schools, however, there has been improvement in six out of the nine subjects that were more than ten percentage points below the Northern Ireland average;

¹ The inspection report for March 2013 is available on www.etini.gov.uk

- the high level of the pupils' motivation, engagement and participation in their learning, and their mature approach to sharing, discussing and challenging the views of others;
- the quality of the provision in science which is now good, particularly due to the improved quality of the planning, learning, teaching and assessment practice within the department and the effective leadership and management in raising the standards attained by the pupils;
- the effectiveness of a wide range of well-planned and innovative staff development so that the teachers address the pupils' individual needs better and develop their communication, critical thinking and independent learning skills more effectively;
- the significant improvement in the quality of teachers' planning to provide greater consistency in the learning experiences for the pupils, including the effective use of assessment, to provide teaching which is differentiated appropriately to meet the needs of learners;
- the more focused curricular links with the junior high schools to enable the teachers to build better on the pupils' prior learning in order to progress their learning;
- the more effective strategic leadership of both the pastoral and the academic provision; and
- the effectiveness of the rigorous school development process in raising significantly the standards at GCSE and the learning experiences, skills, attitudes and dispositions of the pupils.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The follow-up inspection has identified that the school has demonstrated the capacity, in its strategic leadership for learning and of achievement, to raise further the standards attained by the pupils in public examinations at A-level. The ETI will monitor the school's progress on the area for improvement.

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