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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School
Newry

April 2007

FOLLOW-UP TO THE AREA INSPECTION OF ABBEY CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL, NEWRY, CO DOWN, BT34 2ED (542-0059)

The school was inspected in January 2005 as part of the pilot area inspection in the Newry and Mourne district. The inspection highlighted strengths in the hard work and motivation of the teachers and their commitment to the ethos and values of the school, the motivation and diligence of most of the pupils, the satisfactory or better quality of the majority of the teaching, and the ability level of the pupils and the results they achieve in external examinations. The inspection also identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the need for a wider range of teaching and learning strategies to develop better the pupils' autonomy as learners, their capacity to think critically, and their ability to apply their learning;
- the need for improved strategies to support the pupils who experience difficulty with their work, and to support those teachers whose practice demonstrates shortcomings in important areas; and
- the need for a strategic vision that focuses more coherently on the pupils' preparation for adult and working life, through a curriculum that is suitably broad and matched to the pupils abilities.

In the interval since the inspection, the following changes which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the further participation of pupils in accredited vocational programmes which are well matched to their career aspirations;
- a comprehensive programme of staff development to extend the range of teaching and learning strategies; and
- the increased resources allocated to careers related provision.

Following the inspection, the school agreed with the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) to engage in a self-evaluative follow-up process. The school has engaged in extensive self-evaluation and provided clear evidence of the progress made in addressing the issues identified in the original inspection. The processes used to gather the evidence were effective. The Inspectorate confirms that the findings and recommendations arising from the process are accurate and appropriate, and are an effective response to the areas for improvement identified in the original report.

The Inspectorate carried out a follow-up inspection in April 2007 in order to ascertain the progress made and to affirm the evaluations provided by the school. The school has responded constructively, taken appropriate actions and is making good progress on the identified areas for improvement.

The most important improvements which have taken place since the inspection are:

- the development of learning and teaching strategies which support the pupils' capacity to become increasingly autonomous learners and which take cognisance of their individual learning styles;
- the good practice established in the development and use of information and communication technology to enable pupils to maximise their learning through the independent use of materials made available through the school's Intranet;
- the extension of links with the local college of further education in providing a broader curriculum which is well aligned to the pupils' career aspirations; and
- the improved provision of support for those pupils experiencing difficulty in English and mathematics.

The school has made good progress in addressing the key areas for action. The parents and broader community can have confidence in the school's commitment to improvement and the effectiveness of its self-evaluation process in response to the findings of the inspection.

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