

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College,
Bangor, County Down

DE Ref No 421-0296

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2024



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Follow-up to the inspection of Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College, BT20 4TB (421-0296)

Introduction

Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College is an 11-18 co-educational controlled non-selective post-primary school. Its vision is for pupils to experience success daily through the values of respect, happiness, success, responsibility and kindness. The school aims to enhance further its inclusive ethos through the submission of a development proposal to transform to Controlled Integrated Status with effect from 1 September 2025.

This follow-up inspection was carried out in May 2024 and provided the school with the opportunity to demonstrate its progress in addressing the areas for action from the time of the last inspection in May 2023.

Since the time of the original inspection in 2016, the enrolment has increased from 1,483 to 1,847 pupils; the number of pupils with a statement of educational need has increased from 29 to 122; the number of teachers has increased from 99 to 115 and one-quarter of teachers are new to the school; a new vice-principal and head of technology and design have been appointed; and the number of classroom assistants has increased from 9 to 65.

Views of pupils, parents and staff

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to pupils, parents and staff in advance of the follow-up inspection.

Fifteen percent (224) of pupils responded across the key stages, a minority of whom also provided written comments. Inspectors also met and spoke with pupils from years 8, 10 and 11 in focus groups; and from years 8-11 during their classes and lunchtime.

Most of the pupils who responded to the questionnaire indicated that their teachers treat them with care and respect, and they can talk to someone if they have a problem. They value how they are encouraged to set goals for their learning, and they consider their relationships and sexuality education to be relevant. In the written comments, the pupils value the support from their teachers, the extra-curricular opportunities and their inclusive school. They highlighted that they would like more opportunities for their views to inform their learning and for policies to be applied consistently across the school.

Fourteen percent (210) of parents responded to the online questionnaire. Almost all of the parents are happy with the curriculum being provided for their children and the links with other organisations and clubs. Most indicated that their children are happy at school and are making good progress. They are happy with their child's learning experiences, the pastoral care and safeguarding processes, and would recommend the school to others.

The majority of the eighty-nine parents who provided written comments were wholly positive about the life and work of the school, the strategic leadership, and the care, support and encouragement of the staff for their children in their learning. The issues raised in the pupil and parent questionnaires, which related to communication, inconsistencies in the pupils' learning and the outworking of policies, were discussed with the principal, chair of governors and a representative of the Education Authority (EA).

Fifty-six percent (64) of the teaching staff responded to the questionnaire and all are clear about the school's vision. Almost all value their recent professional learning and opportunities to share their skills, including how their views are sought and acted upon. They appreciate the resources they have to their job, the community links and the importance placed on their wellbeing. Eleven teachers provided written comments and almost all were wholly positive about the welcoming, inclusive ethos, their enjoyment of teaching the pupils and the many opportunities for development in meeting the pupils' needs. In addition, 28 non-teaching staff completed questionnaires who highlighted their enjoyment of their job.

Key actions

During this period, the key actions which affect the work of the school include:

- the external support provided by the EA in relation to leadership, learning and teaching, special educational needs, data analysis, careers education, information and guidance, child protection and positive behaviour management;
- the appointment of a social worker in school, a sustainability co-ordinator, and an additional deputy head of year for all year groups;
- the development of support classes across the year groups to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) through a learning hub with a multi-sensory facility;
- the adjustments to the accommodation to enhance physical accessibility for all pupils and staff; and
- the creation of an outdoor classroom, zoned areas, a sustainable garden and designation as a 'Forest School' to support pupils' wellbeing and holistic development.

Key findings

- The school has developed well its curriculum provision to better meet the pupils' wide range of abilities, interests and aspirations, including 27 applied and nine general courses at Key Stage (KS) 4; and 17 applied and eight general courses at post-16. Importantly, there is an increase in the number of pupils studying English and mathematics at post-16; and accessing English literature and further mathematics at GCSE. With an increase in pupils choosing technology and design at KS4, staff plan to review the curriculum pathways to reflect the widening range of abilities.

- The pupils who spoke to inspectors highlighted how they value their learning experiences across the curriculum to develop their thinking, practical, creative and physical skills. They appreciate how their success is celebrated across the curriculum including daily praise, feedback, encouraging words, displays of their work, the college's awards process, cookery competitions and sporting achievements at regional and national level. Other successes include winning the Northern Ireland Young Enterprise Award, attaining the Rights Respecting Schools Award at silver level, the International School Accreditation Award and Eco flag.
- The substantive development of the sixth-form provision includes a creative entry policy to foster the pupils' interview skills; an induction process with a residential visit; a well-considered enrichment programme to develop the pupils' leadership, communication and advocacy skills, with opportunities for altruism; and a monitoring process supported effectively by mentoring to help pupils in their learning and transition to appropriate pathways beyond school.
- The pupils' progress from their individual starting points is now demonstrated more clearly through the extensive analysis of internal qualitative and quantitative data. Importantly, this process involves the establishment of interventions which are supporting more effectively those pupils who are at risk of underachieving or disengaging from their learning.
- The pupils' learning experiences across the curriculum have improved through the strategic leadership of an innovative staff professional learning (SPL) programme tailored to the individual needs and aspirations of staff. In the effective lessons, the pupils benefit from well-planned lessons and purposeful learning environments. They engage well in the planned opportunities to develop their skills in analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In responding to skilful probing questions, they apply their learning in differing real-life contexts and value the active, practical approaches to learning with fast-paced strategies to consolidate their understanding. The pupils now need their thinking skills and personal capabilities enhanced consistently through more active participation in, and ownership of, the assessment of their learning in order to bring about improvements in the quality of their work. Staff re-engaging in the observation of learning and using the views of pupils to inform planning will help to enhance further the consistency in the pupils' learning.
- The provision in mathematics and technology and design, and the standards in English have improved since the original inspection through the middle leaders' robust self-evaluation and strategic leadership of learning. The pupils progress well in response to their clearly defined learning intentions and opportunities for problem-solving through paired working, and self- and peer-evaluation across the three subjects. They engage actively with digital resources to extend their learning.

Child Protection

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child and adult protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Going Forward

Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College's strategic leadership of the innovative SPL tailored to the individual needs and aspirations of staff has led to improvements in pupils' learning experiences, their holistic development and the outcomes they attain.

The ETI, through the District Inspector, will continue to work with the school to take forward the areas for consideration in this report and to share examples of effective practice from which others may learn.

No further follow-up inspection is required.

Appendix 1: Quantitative terms


In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

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