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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Castle High School
Belfast**

January 2008

SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAMME (SSP) FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION OF CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL, BELFAST (121-0258)

The follow-up inspection in January 2007 highlighted strengths in:

- the high staff morale in spite of the many significant challenges facing the teachers;
- the collegiate, consistent approach to discipline being taken forward by the school;
- the effective monitoring of standards and target-setting by senior management;
- the school's action plans which identified appropriate areas for improvement;
- the good progress in the development of ICT throughout the school; and
- the intensive in-class support provided to the pupils in basic literacy and numeracy.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- a reduction in the number of suspensions and an increase in the attendance rate of the pupils in all year groups; and
- the need to continue to focus on the key area of improving the standards achieved by the pupils at every level.

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

- the enrolment of pupils into year 8 increased from 13 to 21 pupils; total enrolment is now 140 pupils;
- the number of teachers has remained stable at approximately 15; around one-third of the teachers are beginning teachers on temporary contracts; and
- a small group of year 12 pupils have been transferred to alternative education provision.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out a follow-up inspection on 16 January 2008.

The school is emerging from a period of particularly challenging circumstances and has made satisfactory progress in addressing the key areas for improvement. The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the follow-up inspection:

- the continued enthusiasm and hard work of most of the staff to promote and effect improvement;

- the significantly reduced number of suspensions;
- the good work of the SSP co-ordinator in further developing the review and target-setting process, which is underpinned by effective data analysis and shared to good effect with staff;
- the school's action plans which are well-focused on appropriate areas for improvement and are reviewed regularly;
- the effective co-ordination and good outcomes in ICT; and
- the sound quality of the teaching and learning in the lessons visited.

The senior management team recognises that much remains to be done and the areas which need further improvement include the need:

- to focus sharply on improving the standards achieved by the pupils at all levels; and
- to address the poor attendance rate of the pupils.

Since the inspection, the school has evaluated the progress made in the areas for improvement identified in the follow-up inspection in January 2007. The Inspectorate recommends that the school builds upon this process of self-evaluation and review as a means to bring about further improvement.

The follow-up inspections confirm that the school has demonstrated evidence of improvement in a few areas, but some areas for improvement remain to be addressed more rigorously.

The Inspectorate will continue to monitor the work of the school to ensure that the improvements which are needed are implemented.

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