

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

Dunluce School, Bushmills, County Antrim

DE Ref No 321-0222

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in June 2024



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Follow-up to the inspection of Dunluce School, Bushmills, BT57 8QQ (321-0222)

Introduction

Dunluce School is a controlled, non-selective 11-16 post-primary school situated in Bushmills in County Antrim. The school's vision aspires to create a safe and inclusive environment that motivates all and promotes 'an ethos of aspiration and achievement'. The vision is centred on the holistic development of the pupils who are 'supported and encouraged to reach their full potential', in an environment where 'their progress and achievement is acknowledged and celebrated.'

This follow-up inspection was carried out in June 2024 and provided the school with the opportunity to demonstrate its progress in addressing the areas for action from the last inspection in April 2023, namely, to improve leadership capacity, and to improve pupils' outcomes.

In September 2023, as part of the Education Authority's (EA) area plan, a development proposal to discontinue education at the school from 31 August 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter and facilitate, in effect, an amalgamation of the school with two others was approved by the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education. A new co-educational, 11-18, non-selective, controlled integrated post-primary school will therefore be established, with effect from 1 September 2026.

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.

Four per cent of pupils (9) responded to the questionnaire across all key stages and there were no written responses. Most of the pupils indicated that the staff treat them with care and respect and all of them stated that there were adults in the school that they could talk to if they had any concerns. Inspectors met and spoke with 19 pupils from years 8 to 11 in two focus groups. The pupils were positive about the care and support they receive from staff and reported that the adults listen to, and act upon, their ideas. They all said they feel safe and believe their school is welcoming.

Six per cent of parents (12) responded to the questionnaire, with a small number providing additional written comments. Nearly all of the parents who responded indicated that their child is happy in school and is making good progress in their learning; nearly all are content with the quality of teaching and support for learning and all are content with the pastoral care in the school.

Seventy-five per cent of teachers (15) responded to the questionnaires and there was a small number of written comments. All expressed clarity about the school's vision and believe that their skills are valued with opportunities to share these. All teachers reported that their safeguarding training has been updated within two years and almost all of the teachers stated that they have benefitted from professional learning and development opportunities.

Seventy-nine per cent of the support staff (11) responded to the questionnaires and nearly all of the responses were wholly positive. There was clarity about the school's vision and nearly all feel that staff wellbeing is promoted well.

Issues raised in the questionnaires were shared with the principal and representatives from the board of governors.

Key actions

Key actions which affect the work of the school are set out below.

- The senior leadership team (SLT) keep the curriculum under review and changes are made to meet better the pupils' needs and aspirations; pupil outcomes, aspirations and future pathways inform this process.
- A wide range of qualitative and quantitative information is used by the staff to identify pupils who require targeted interventions and support with aspects of their learning.
- The embedding of the Dunluce ten-point lesson structure provides a framework for consistent learning and teaching across the school.
- The school leadership has prioritised improving pupil attendance, which has declined in recent years.
- The school has received external support provided by the EA in relation to action planning and the development of the role of the middle leaders.

Key findings

- The SLT knows well its improvement priorities and address effectively the challenges that the school faces around securing good learning experiences and outcomes for the pupils within the context of the planned re-organisation.
- The school's vision is lived out appropriately by all members of the school community; improving pupil achievement has taken place in a supportive and caring environment.
- The middle leaders who met with inspectors know and promote well their areas of responsibility and they have made notable improvements to the provision for learning.
- The staff avail of professional learning and development, including contributing well within the Coleraine Area Learning Partnership, to improve their knowledge and skills in aspects of leadership and management and in wider classroom practice and pastoral support for the pupils.

- A higher proportion of pupils attain five GCSE (or level two equivalent) qualifications, including English and mathematics, at grades A* to C since 2017. In the past three years, pupil outcomes have surpassed the internal targets set. In 2023, outcomes at GCSE level attained by those pupils with free school meals entitlement were slightly higher compared to those pupils not entitled to free school meals, at both five and seven GCSEs (or equivalents), including English and mathematics, at grades A* to C.
- The provision for English and mathematics is effective and in all the lessons observed a good range of engaging learning and teaching approaches were used by the teachers to enable the pupils to progress well in their learning across both subject areas.
- There is consistency in the quality of learning and teaching. All of the lessons observed during the inspection were effective in promoting active learning. Key features of this practice included: well planned and carefully structured lessons, imaginative learning activities, judiciously scaffolded teacher support and pupils who were engaged in their learning.
- Improving pupil attendance is a challenge identified by the school and staff are working proactively to address this.
- The school celebrates well the pupils' successes in sporting, academic and social events through positive oral and written feedback, celebratory assemblies and targeted social media messages. There is an appropriate emphasis on motivating pupils through an affirmative rewards programme across the school, which encourages pupils to engage more positively in their education.
- In light of the planning for the discontinuation of education at Dunluce School and the school's important role in the establishment of the new school, it will be especially important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.
- The senior leadership has identified appropriately the need to maintain close oversight of the work of the school to ensure learning experiences and outcomes for pupils are optimised as a key element of the successful outworking of the area planning decision.

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

The staff in Dunluce School work collegially to support pupils and improve their learning experiences. The improved focus in securing greater consistency in learning and teaching along with effective pastoral care and curriculum changes have contributed to improvements in learning experiences and outcomes for the pupils. The ETI, through engagement of the District Inspector, will work with the school as it addresses the area for action identified by the school's leadership and endorsed by this inspection.

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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