

# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

## Dunluce School, Bushmills, County Antrim

Controlled, co-educational, 11-16, non-selective secondary school  
DE Ref No 321-0222

### Report of a Follow-up Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in April 2023



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# Fourth follow-up inspection of Dunluce School, County Antrim, BT57 8QQ (321-0222)

## Introduction

The [original inspection](#) of Dunluce School, Bushmills was carried out in February 2012 when the quality of education provided by the school was evaluated as requiring significant improvement. The school entered the formal intervention process in March 2012.

Two follow-up inspections took place in [September 2013](#) and [February 2015](#) and at the time of the second follow-up, the school was evaluated as satisfactory and exited the formal intervention process.

A [third follow-up inspection](#) took place in March 2017, which was impacted by industrial action short of strike. The inspectors were unable to evaluate the extent to which the important areas for improvement left at the last inspection had been addressed, namely to:

- develop the capacity of post-holders and improve the quality of leadership; and
- sustain and bring more consistency and further improvement to pupil outcomes.

Consequently, Dunluce School has remained in the follow-up process.

Following the periods of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Monitoring Visit in November 2021 to help the school reflect on its provision, with a view to being well prepared for the second follow-up inspection.

A fourth follow-up inspection was carried out in April 2023, which was also impacted by action short of strike.

Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that the school would co-operate with the inspection team in relation to elements of the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils and also with aspects of leadership and management. Seven of the 20 teaching staff, who all hold positions of leadership, co-operated with the inspection process and provided first-hand insight and information on their areas of responsibility.

As a result of the industrial action the school was unable to provide a complete inspection evidence base to demonstrate the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. The ETI has a [statutory](#) duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education being provided for children and young people. The follow-up inspection proceeded on a partial basis as outlined above and the key findings are based on evidence made available at the time of the inspection visit.

## Key actions and changes

In the interim period since the previous follow-up inspection in March 2017, the following actions and changes have taken place.

- The school is part of the Education Authority's (EA) 2018 Area Plan, which proposes an amalgamation of Coleraine College, North Coast Integrated College and Dunluce School.
- The school development plan and associated action plans have been adjusted appropriately to address inspection findings and reflect new pastoral and curriculum priorities.
- The senior leadership team has been refreshed and has two new members, who have each completed a post-graduate leadership qualification.
- The school enrolment has declined from 308 pupils in 2017 to 200 pupils.
- The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need has increased from 9% in 2017 to 12% currently.
- The senior leadership team has further prioritised pupil welfare (including nurture), attendance and mental health issues, accentuated by the pandemic.
- Staff have accessed a range of relevant professional learning, including trauma-informed practice and special educational needs-related training in aspects of dyslexia and autism.
- The senior leadership team has continued to promote better links between the school and the parents, through implementing consultation and incorporating feedback from surveys.

In the interval since the original inspection, the school received external support provided by the EA in relation to:

- improving aspects of learning and teaching and leadership; and
- initiating collaborative networks with other schools, within the area learning community and beyond, to support school improvement.

## Views of pupils, parents/carers and staff

As part of this follow-up inspection, there was an opportunity for parents and carers to complete a confidential questionnaire. Just over 9% of parents (15) responded to the online questionnaire, with eight providing additional written comments. The responses were wholly positive and reflected parental appreciation of the academic and pastoral commitment of school staff in meeting the needs of the pupils. All the comments stated in the questionnaire responses were shared with the principal and representatives of the governors.

As a result of the industrial action short of strike, the online questionnaires were not distributed to the pupils and staff. Therefore, it is not possible to report on the views of all the pupils and staff. The ETI intends to re-issue the questionnaires at the time of the next inspection visit to complete this follow-up inspection.

## Key findings

Inspectors were unable to evaluate the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. The following findings are based on the evidence available at the time of the follow-up inspection as set out above.

- The senior leaders have prioritised the arrangements for safeguarding, including the preventative curriculum provision. The work is supported by a taught personal development programme, which supports pupils in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to stay safe.
- Effective and formal leadership oversight practices have been affected adversely by the senior leadership team's inability, for example, to scrutinise work and observe lessons. It is important that formal and supportive monitoring processes are re-introduced at the soonest opportunity in the interests of both pupils and teachers.
- The school has identified issues around patterns of poor attendance and has been appropriately proactive in addressing this through the constrained resources it has, including soliciting some limited support from the EA.
- The heads of English and mathematics set appropriately high expectations for pupil success and have contributed well to an improved culture in the school that expects pupils to attain well and succeed.
- The representatives from the board of governors that met with the inspectors are long serving, know the school well and have continued their support through increasingly difficult times brought about by the declining enrolment, the pandemic and the area plan.
- The pupils from the year 8 nurture group, who met with inspectors spoke well about their positive experiences in school. They appreciate the help they receive from the staff that look after their care and welfare.

## Key findings in relation to Safeguarding

The following findings are based on the evidence available at the time of the follow-up inspection.

Due to the partial nature of the evidence base, the ETI is unable to evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. In discussion with the inspectors, the pupils reported that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. They spoke positively about the supportive, approachable teachers, the progress they are making in their learning and the welcoming small-school environment.

## Conclusion

The school's fourth follow-up inspection is incomplete due to the action short of strike of the teaching unions. The ETI has not been able to evaluate the school's progress in effecting the required improvements in the quality of its education provision for a period of over six years.

As the school did not provide sufficient evidence to evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding pupils due to action short of strike of the teaching unions, the Department of Education will write to the Education Authority and the Board of Governors to seek assurance on the efficacy of the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

The areas for improvement remain as the need to:

- develop the capacity of post-holders and improve the quality of leadership; and
- sustain and bring more consistency and further improvement to pupil outcomes.

In light of the school's involvement in the EA's area plan, it will be especially important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

The district inspector will continue to monitor the school's progress and the follow-up inspection will be completed at the request of the school, up to and including June 2023. Subsequently, the inspection will be completed without further notice.

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