

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

Larne High School, Larne, County Antrim

DE Ref No 321-0038

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2024



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Follow-up to the inspection of Larne High School and Learning Support Centre, Larne, BT40 1NT (321-0038)

Introduction

Larne High School and Learning Support Centre is an all ability 11-18 co-educational controlled post-primary school. The school enrolment has grown over the past number of years from 672 in 2020 to 797 pupils in 2024. The number of Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (SPiMS) classes has also increased; there are three classes for pupils with learning needs and four classes for pupils with autism. The school's vision for education is to be a centre of excellence where high quality teaching and learning will serve to enhance the lives of its pupils enabling them to achieve to their potential in a spirit of mutual respect and support. The school community is guided by the core values of "Respect, Community and Achievement".

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 February 2023. During this time eleven additional teachers and two co-ordinators have been appointed resulting in a complement of sixty-two full-time equivalent teachers, and the number of classroom assistants has increased from 37 in 2020 to 50 in 2024. The leadership has worked with the Education Authority (EA) to negotiate more teaching hours in lieu of classroom assistance hours to support the needs of a small group of pupils.

Views of parents, staff and pupils

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

Nineteen per cent (154) of the pupils responded to the questionnaire, with one-fifth of the pupils providing additional written comments. Most of the pupils reported that their teachers treated them in a caring and respectful way. A majority stated that the teachers consulted with them to establish teaching methods which helped them to learn better.

Six per cent (45) of parents responded to the online questionnaire. Most of the parental responses indicated that their child was happy in school, and they were making progress in learning. Most parents acknowledged how the school had good links with its community. Over one-half of the parents provided additional written comments and two-thirds of these comments expressed satisfaction with the work of the school, while one-third (8) felt the school could improve its communication with them.

Over one-half (34) of the teachers completed the questionnaire and most reported that: their views are valued and acted upon; they have the resources to do their job effectively; and they benefit from professional learning opportunities. Of the teaching, non-teaching and support staff who responded in the questionnaire, most are clear about the school's vision as a community of learners.

Issues raised in the pupil, parent and staff questionnaires were shared with the principal and chair of governors.

Key actions

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

- The school has received EA support for leaders and teachers to build further their capacity in relation to; school improvement planning; self-evaluation; and, the use of pastoral data.
- A member of the senior leadership team has been appointed with responsibility for the quality of learning and teaching, and for leading teacher professional learning. The middle leadership team has grown in size with the addition of twelve teachers whose focus is on raising further the quality of learning and teaching across the school.
- The staffing team has been enhanced, with the addition of four teachers, including year heads and form teachers across the year groups, to focus on the effective use of data and the subsequent support interventions, to ensure wider responsibility for monitoring and reviews of pupil progress.
- Leadership of the pastoral care provision has been restructured to include the appointment of two heads of year for each year group.
- Governors meet regularly with pastoral and subject co-ordinators to develop further their responsibility and oversight of areas of school development, such as the pastoral provision.

Key findings

- In discussions with inspectors, the pupils report that they feel safe in school and that staff support them with any concerns they have. Senior pupils value the efforts of their teachers in addressing any concerns they may have in aspects of their learning. They report that they are developing their organisational and leadership skills through the roles they take on as heads of school or deputy heads of school, prefects, membership of the school council or as year 8 pupil mentors.
- The staff use pupil performance and pastoral data with confidence to monitor progress, identify the most appropriate strategies and intervention programmes required, and implement them to support well the pupils in their learning. Importantly, the parents of children with SEN are involved meaningfully in the development of each child's individual education plan, and in the planning for appropriate supports for their child.

- Individual pupil target setting, and a cycle of monitoring, evaluation and review are now developing across all subject areas. In addition, the school is engaging further strategies to better understand pupil attitudes to learning to help improve the overall attendance rates, which have declined since the Covid -19 pandemic and have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels.
- The school's data shows that a majority (59%) of all pupils attain five GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C (or level two equivalent) including English and mathematics, which is a significant increase from the time of the original inspection, and that the pupils now attain in line with school expectations and their ability. The standards at GCSE level attained by those pupils with free school meals entitlement has also improved significantly.
- All lessons observed during the inspection were effective in promoting learning for the pupils. The development of learning and teaching methods is informed by research and is led well by a group of middle leaders within the school. These middle leaders have developed resources to enable the staff across the school to reflect on the impact of teaching on the quality of the pupils' learning. Importantly, they share effective practice and lead staff professional learning, which includes the classroom assistants, in areas such as, retrieval practice and strategies for supporting pupils with autism. The school has identified the need to continue to develop further consistency in effective learning and teaching approaches, and the inspection findings endorse this.
- Extensive staff professional learning to improve provision across the school and to support more effectively those pupils who have special educational needs, including for pupils attending the SPiMS, has been a key area of focus. The staff from the SPiMS classes have disseminated their professional learning and effective practice across the school.
- The number of subject options has increased at both Key Stage (KS) 4 and at post-16. At KS 4 the curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the requirements of the Entitlement Framework; most importantly, it is meeting better the needs, aspirations and abilities of the pupils. At post-16, the subject choice for pupils has widened over the past number of years and includes a range of general, applied, double-award and triple-award (large-size) qualifications. The number of subjects delivered does not currently meet the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. There are limited opportunities for pupils to study subjects in other schools or at the local further education college. Due to the increasing enrolment and the widening range of pupil abilities across all year groups, it will be important to continue to review the curriculum offer to ensure it is meeting the needs of all of the pupils.

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 ETI will continue to monitor, through the District Inspector the progress of the school in addressing the area for action, namely:


- to develop further the curriculum offered to meet the needs of the widening range of abilities of the pupils across all key stages.

No further follow-up inspection is required.

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