

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

Movilla High School, Newtownards,
County Down

DE Ref No 421-0012

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2024



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Follow-up to the inspection of Movilla High School, Newtownards, BT23 7HA (421-0012)

Introduction

Movilla High School is a co-educational, controlled, non-selective 11-16 post-primary school in Newtownards. Its vision is to support pupils to achieve academically and develop holistically as confident, ambitious individuals ready to contribute positively to the world.

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 2022.

Since the time of the last inspection the enrolment has increased from 402 to 600 pupils, including 140 pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and 234 requiring additional support with their learning. The number of staff has increased to 44 teachers, 40 classroom assistants and 14 support staff; and a new principal, designated teacher for child protection, head of mathematics, head of learning for life and work, music, languages and religious education have been appointed.

Views of pupils, staff and parents

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

Nine percent (56) of pupils responded across the key stages to the questionnaire. Most of the pupils 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 the majority consider that the school council works well to improve aspects of school life.

Sixty-six per cent (27) of teaching staff responded to the questionnaire, ten of whom provided written comments. The majority are clear about the school's vision and value their recent professional learning. Almost all highlighted the importance given to staff wellbeing, their awareness of safeguarding processes, how their skills are valued and the opportunities they have to share their skills with others. The written comments highlighted the benefit of community links and the family ethos across the school.

Five per cent (27) of parents responded to the questionnaire, with 15 parents providing written comments. Most indicated that their child is happy at school; is making good progress; and that they are happy with their child's learning experiences, the safeguarding processes, the courses offered and the links with other organisations and clubs. The majority of the written comments highlighted the appreciation of parents of the support of the staff for their children's learning. The issues raised by parents and staff referred to communication, accommodation and resources and options available at GCSE and these were discussed with the principal, chair of governors and a representative from the Education Authority (EA).

Inspectors also met and spoke with groups of pupils from years 8 to 11 during the inspection.

Key actions

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

- The school has received external support provided by the EA in relation to SEN, pastoral care, attendance and the promotion of positive behaviour.
- With the support of the EA, the school extended its specialist provisions for pupils with autism to include year 10 and year 11 pupils and established two nurture classes.
- The governors established sub-committees and appointed a new chair of the teaching and learning committee, and agreed a schedule for senior and middle leaders to provide them with updates.

Key findings

- The school curriculum is broader and more responsive across key stages (KS) 3 and 4. The appointment of more subject specialist teachers has enhanced the KS 3 curriculum. At KS 4, the pupils can access a wider range of GCSE and level 2 qualifications to better meet their needs, including the option now to study English literature. Over the past three years the school is successfully closing the gap between the pupils with free-school meals entitlement (FSME) and non-FSME pupils in attaining five or more GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics, at grades A* to C. Appropriately, the school has identified the need to promote better engagement in co-curricular opportunities to enhance the pupils' wider skills, attitudes, dispositions and aspirations.
- The pupils benefit from the introduction of a form period and a greater focus on the taught preventative curriculum, with more links with external agencies, such as the Police Service of Northern Ireland and health professionals to prepare them for life beyond school. The school still requires further support from multi-agencies in helping those pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern.
- The pupils' changing needs, abilities and aspirations are met better through the impact of staff professional learning (SPL) in effective planning, differentiation, questioning and feedback to improve the pupils' outcomes. In the lessons observed across the curriculum, the pupils engage enthusiastically in well-planned learning activities and give extended responses to skilful questioning. When given the opportunity, the pupils use retrieval techniques to reinforce learning and assessment. They respond well to active learning and creative opportunities to apply their learning in real-life contexts. There remains variation in the extent of the impact of this SPL in all lessons observed on pupils' outcomes.

- In discussion with inspectors the pupils highlighted their friendly, welcoming school and their friendships with those pupils from differing backgrounds. They value the support and encouragement of most teachers and enjoy learning in pairs, groups and practically across the curriculum. They spoke about how they use their learning beyond the classroom to exercise, eat healthily, appreciate music, read for enjoyment, speak a different language, and apply their numeracy and digital skills. They would like more opportunities to hear from employers and providers in helping them to decide on career pathways and they expressed a wish for better school accommodation.
- In English, the pupils' improving outcomes in English language at GCSE level at grades A* to C, indicate that the higher-level reading and writing skills of a majority of pupils are developed well. In mathematics, more pupils experience success in improving outcomes at GCSE level at grades A* to C through their teachers making their learning accessible, relevant and enjoyable, with effective at-elbow support from staff for most pupils.

Child Protection

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

The ETI will monitor the progress of the school in addressing the need to update the staff handbook for substitute teachers and classroom assistants.

Going Forward


Movilla High School has demonstrated improvement in the outcomes in English and the provision for mathematics. The curriculum is meeting better the pupils' needs and abilities. ETI, through the engagement of the District Inspector, will work with the school as it addresses the areas for action laid out in this report.

No further follow-up inspection is required.

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