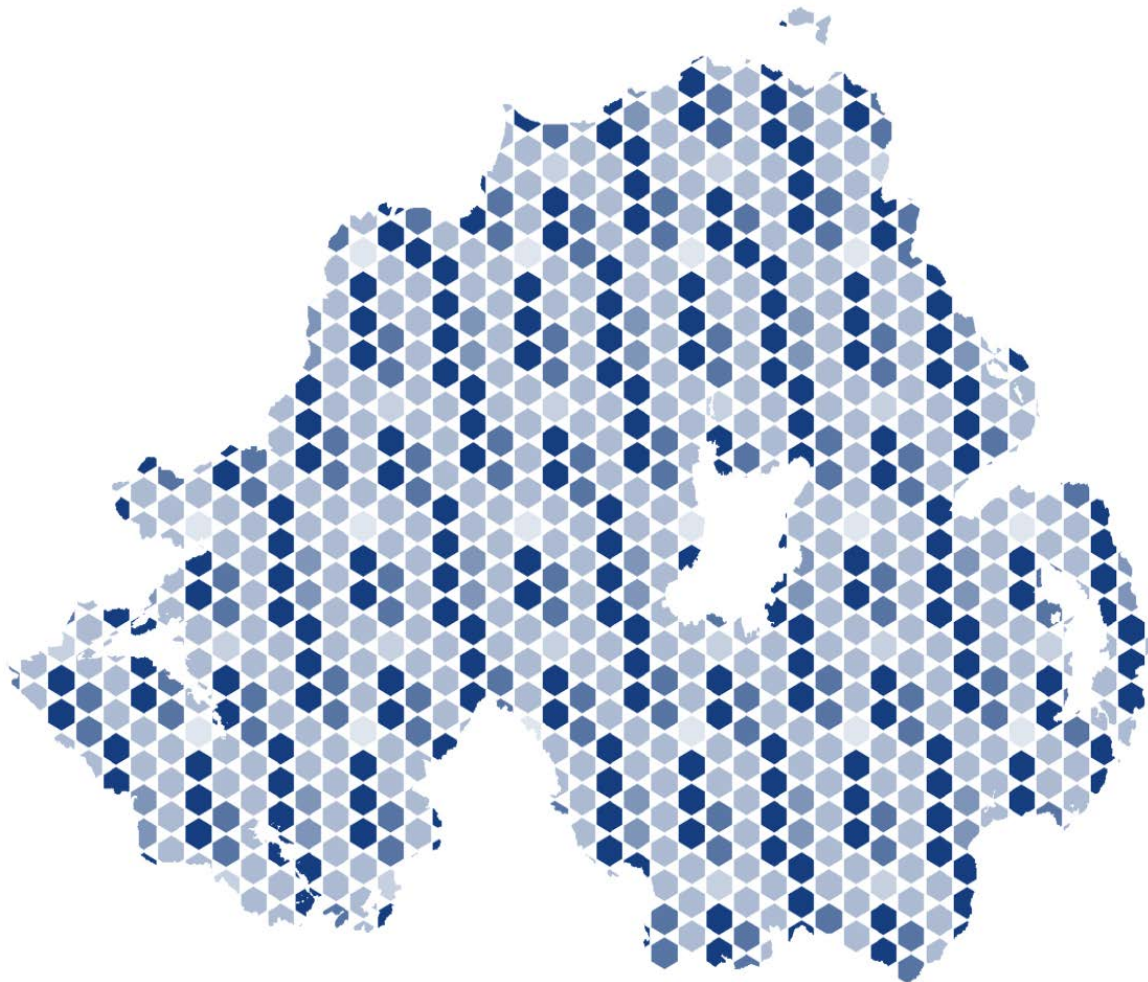


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Regent House School,
Newtownards, County Down

Co-educational, 11-18 controlled, selective school

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
in December 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF REGENT HOUSE SCHOOL, NEWTOWNARDS

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection¹ of Regent House School, in March 2015 when the quality of education was evaluated as satisfactory². The areas identified at the follow-up inspection were the need to improve:

- the quality of planning, teaching and assessment in order to raise the overall standards attained by the pupils, particularly the levels of attainment in public examinations;
- the rigor and effectiveness of self-evaluation at all levels, including the role of the governors in self-evaluation leading to improvement, to ensure that actions taken bring about the required improvements; and
- the curriculum provision to ensure it meets more fully the needs, interests, abilities and career aspirations of the pupils.

The key targets in the associated action plans were appropriate and the progress made in the areas for improvement was discussed with the school during the interim visits carried out by the ETI in October 2015 and May 2016. The ETI carried out a follow up inspection in December 2016.

The school reports that Education Authority (EA) staff provided effective support during the follow-up process.

In the interval since the initial inspection, the following changes and actions which affect the work of the school include:

- the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) has more than doubled, from 5.2% in 2014 to 11.3% in 2016;
- the percentage of pupils staying on from year 13 to year 14 has increased from 87.7% in 2014, which was below the NI average, to 93%, which is now above the Northern Ireland (NI) average;
- the provision for pupils who require additional support with their learning has been reviewed with the appointment of a new special educational needs co-ordinator and
- the senior leadership team (SLT) has been restructured with a new vice principal (pastoral) and five new senior teachers, and roles and responsibilities have been reviewed.

Key findings

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement are now good. The SLT is demonstrating the capacity to bring about sustained improvement and raise standards through: forging stronger links with middle management to secure a wider ownership of responsibility and accountability for the whole-school improvement agenda; embedding an agreed, coherent approach across all levels of leadership to track and record rigorously the ongoing progress of the pupils; combining

¹ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/>

² From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as satisfactory has been reported as the school needing to address important areas for improvement.

pastoral and academic data to identify underperformance and put in place a more comprehensive range of targeted intervention and support programmes, and the sharper use of data also to provide clearer and more focused guidance for pupils with regard to subject choices at GCE A level.

The curriculum provision has been reviewed appropriately. There is now collaboration with a neighbouring school and subjects such as journalism, applied business and applied information technology have been added to broaden the curriculum offer. This review is ongoing and the SLT have a coherent strategic vision for the further development of the curriculum.

The governors have clearer lines of communication with staff and a number of them are assigned to work closely with those senior teachers leading on aspects of school improvement. In addition, there are regular presentations by SLT and heads of departments to the governors to enable them to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of actions to promote improvement and to challenge appropriately.

Overall, the achievements and standards of the pupils are now good; at key stage 4, the improved outcomes are now well above the corresponding NI averages. At post-16, the improved outcomes are broadly in line with the corresponding NI averages.

The proportion of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE qualifications or equivalents, including English and mathematics, at grades A* to C has increased by twelve percentage points to 96.2%, and is now well above the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category. Across the subjects, the majority of them are now above the corresponding NI average at GCSE grades A* to B. There has been a significant increase, by 35 percentage points, in the proportion of pupils entitled to FSM attaining five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalents at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.

At post-16, the proportion of year 14 pupils attaining three or more GCE A levels or equivalents at grades A* to C has increased significantly to 74.2% and is now in line with the NI average for similar schools.

The quality of provision in English is now good. There has been a significant improvement in outcomes in GCSE English and English Literature at grades A* to B, both of which have risen by more than 20 percentage points since 2014. While English Literature A level outcomes have fluctuated, the three-year average is still in line with the NI average. The quality of provision is also now good; all the lessons observed were good or better with the majority being very good. The planning and schemes of work have been updated appropriately to focus more sharply on progressing the pupils' learning.

The quality of provision for learning is now good. The SLT has led a strategic programme of staff development focused appropriately on learning and teaching, but including sharing of effective practice at all levels. Most of the lessons observed during the follow-up inspection were effective (good or better) in promoting learning. Characteristics of the effective practice included effective questioning which challenged the pupils to give extended responses, well-planned opportunities for the pupils to work in groups or pairs with high expectations and sound working relationships based on effective classroom management.

A more coherent, structured programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) has been established, including careers conferences and events in school to ensure pupils are well informed about careers pathways.

Conclusion

Regent House School demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The follow up inspection identified the following area for improvement:

- to sustain and improve further the overall standards attained by the pupils in public examinations, particularly in a significant minority of individual subjects at GCE A level.

The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

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