

Report of a Post-primary Inspection  
Parkhall Integrated College

September 2024

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Parkhall Integrated College (the College) is a co-educational, 11-18 controlled integrated non-selective school in Antrim Town. The College is a state-of-the-art new-build which was completed in 2018, and now includes a recently opened two-storey extension wing. The College also includes a wing which caters for youth and community provision. At the time of the inspection, the library and the study area of the sixth form centre had been necessarily repurposed, to temporarily provide additional classroom accommodation elsewhere in the school for a specialist provision in mainstream (SPiMS) class, for a small group of pupils in key stage (KS) 3, which is in its first year; the installation of temporary modular accommodation from the Education Authority (EA) is awaited. The College is in a shared education partnership with two local post-primary schools.

The current principal took up post in August 2022. The current enrolment of 1062 pupils is well above the approved enrolment, having increased steadily over the last number of years. The current approved admissions number for year 8 is 150 pupils; over the last five years admissions into year 8 have ranged from 177 to 199 pupils. The current enrolment of the College's post-16 provision established in September 2017 to provide for 130 pupils, is 154 pupils.

Thirty-one percent of the pupils (324) are entitled to free school meals. Sixteen percent of the pupils (170) have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN), and eight percent of the pupils (90) have a statement of educational need. Three percent of the pupils (29) are newcomers.

A 'Hub' for pupils who have social, behavioural and emotional well-being needs has been established within the College by the EA Post-Primary Behaviour Support & Provisions. The EA employs the three Behaviour Support Assistants who work within the Hub; they work with the College's assistant SEN co-ordinator who acts as a Hub Link Teacher and liaises with the College's senior leadership team.

## **B. 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 inspection.

Across the key stages just over one-third of pupils (368 of 1062) responded to the questionnaire, with 108 pupils providing additional written comments. Almost all of these pupils responded that they feel safe in the College. Most reported that there are adults in the College that they can talk to if they are worried or have a problem and that the teachers and other adults in the College treat them with care and respect. A majority of the pupils feel they are making good progress in their learning.

Around two-fifths of the pupils (170) responded that they did not know if their wellbeing is important to the teachers and other adults in the College and this was discussed with the College leadership, including representatives of the board of governors.

Five percent of the parents responded (44), with 21 providing additional written comments. Most of them reported that their child is happy at the school, that they are happy with their child's learning experiences and that their child is making good progress in their learning. Most of them reported that they have been informed about how to report a safeguarding/child protection concern. A majority reported that the staff have given them information to support their child with any pastoral issues they may face. Nearly one-third felt they did not receive helpful advice about their child's progress.

Sixty-one percent of the teaching staff (45) responded to the questionnaire, with fifteen additional written comments. All of them reported that they are aware of the school's safeguarding/child protection procedures and that their training is updated at least every two years. Nearly ninety percent indicated that they have benefitted from professional learning opportunities. A majority reported staff wellbeing is promoted effectively in the school and in discussions with inspectors, the teachers spoke about how they valued the positive feedback received from the leaders.

Over one-half of the classroom support staff and support staff (37) responded to the questionnaire. Almost all of the support staff reported that if they are worried or have a problem, there is someone they can talk to in school.

Issues raised in the pupil, parent and staff questionnaires or in focus group meetings or discussions with inspectors were shared with the principal and representatives of the board of governors. These included matters relating to aspects of: curricular provision and staffing; pupils' learning; the outworking of policies, such as behaviour management and inconsistencies in dealing with pupil behaviours; and the pace of change.

## **C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION**

The ETI worked alongside the school to consider how well the school:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

## **2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

- Under the direction of the College's board of governors and senior leaders, key changes are being worked through strategically to effect necessary improvement. These have been informed well by consultation and robust evaluation.

- Significant work has been undertaken to review the College's mission statement and associated aims, resulting in the adoption of a new vision statement and five associated core values. Importantly, one of these core values is achievement.
- A re-designed, inclusive curriculum model is being delivered for the 2024/25 academic year; the involvement of all staff in the monitoring and evaluation of its delivery is key to its successful implementation.
- The College is working to strengthen its ethos of integrated education and the changes to the curriculum will better enable the realisation of this.
- There is clear and sustained focus on the development of pedagogical practice through effective professional learning. To optimise the pupils' learning experiences, planning for learning needs to take full account of the new time allocations for subject areas, as well as the range of pupil ability and need.
- Across the College, the pupils' communication (oracy and written) skills and their wider skills and dispositions are underdeveloped.
- The prioritisation of achievement and progress includes, for example, a focus on supporting to good effect those pupils at risk of not achieving both GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics at Grade C or above.
- The College has introduced a bespoke business studies and financial capability programme for all year 10 pupils; the pupils reported to the inspectors that they welcomed the introduction of this programme.
- A range of purposeful strategies are being used to make modern languages accessible and relevant to all.
- The College instils in the pupils a strong social conscience which is connected to its core values and places a high value on its community connections. It also prioritises appropriately the health and wellbeing of the pupils.
- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the College demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance. The College is aware of changes in arrangements for adult protection and this is reflected in the child and adult protection policy.

#### Areas for action:

- to improve the quality and challenge of the learning experiences, to better develop the pupils' communication (oracy and written) skills and their wider skills and dispositions; and
- to monitor and evaluate the progress being made in the implementation of the recent changes to the curriculum.



### **3. MAIN REPORT**

#### **A. SETTING THE VISION**

In the period since August 2022, and in the context of industrial action, a well-considered whole-College development plan has been created and initiated.

Significant work has been undertaken to review the College's mission statement which was informed well by extensive consultation and engagement with all stakeholders. As a result, a new vision has been adopted, with five associated core values which are well understood and known by the school community. The new College vision is: 'To provide an inclusive, caring learning environment where we all feel valued and respected and are empowered to reach our full potential'. Importantly, one of the core values is Achievement.

The priorities for development identified in the College's 2024/25 plan are underpinned by analysis of a comprehensive range of quantitative and qualitative information, including the findings of regular surveys undertaken with all stakeholders. These priorities are aligned well to furthering the realisation of the new College vision. The restructuring of the senior leadership team (SLT) and appointments to a range of posts have been informed by strategic review; posts are aligned well to the priority areas.

The representatives of the governors who met with inspectors are committed to the life and work of the school. They spoke about their active engagement in school life. They provide support and challenge to the College leadership and meet regularly with key staff and stakeholders.

In the focus group meetings with the older pupils, a number of concerns were expressed to the inspectors about the negative impact on GCSE and A Level studies due to teacher absences and instances of having to undertake self-directed learning at post-16. The school leadership, including the governors are very aware of these concerns, while noting that these are staffing challenges which are not particular to the College. They are focused on seeking to address the difficulties in recruitment where teacher absences arise, particularly of specialist teachers for curricular areas such as English, mathematics and science.

#### **B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION**

A re-designed, more inclusive curriculum model is now being delivered in the 2024/25 academic year. Year eight registration groups are now mixed ability groupings. The College's student surveys indicated that pupils wanted access to the full curriculum and a greater range of subject options. Additionally, its staff surveys indicated some concerns about restricted access for pupils to the full range of subjects due to a banded curriculum delivery model. The College is working to strengthen its ethos of integrated education and its changes to the curriculum will better enable the realisation of this. The involvement of all staff in the monitoring and evaluation of its delivery is key to its successful implementation.

Recent changes to the KS 3 curriculum have widened the curriculum offer to meet the statutory requirements for all pupils. As pupils enter KS 4, they have now been provided with equitable access to the full range of subject options. This is an important and positive change as a number of the older pupils spoke to inspectors about not having had the opportunity to undertake certain subjects previously, despite having an ability or interest in the subject, or a need to follow the particular subject to support their intended progression to the next stage of education, training or employment.

The school does not currently meet the requirements of the entitlement framework at post-16. Priority is given to developing further the post-16 curriculum delivered and it has expanded over the past two years. The pupils in year 13 and year 14 spoke to the inspectors about a desire for access to careers education, information, advice and guidance which includes not only advice about progression to higher education, but also about apprenticeship opportunities. There is a good year 13 and year 14 enrichment programme in place, with the pupils having opportunities to gain useful additional accredited qualifications. Such opportunities impact positively on pupils' development of transferable skills, such as communication, creativity, project management and teamworking skills.

The development of a high-quality learning culture is an underpinning aim of the College's new vision. Work was undertaken in the 2023/24 academic year to establish a set of six learning and teaching principles. Monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching had not been possible during the period of industrial action, however work has begun to promote and consolidate the implementation of the six principles through, for example, the work of the teachers who comprise the Teaching and Learning Forum.

The focus on these six principles is evident in the consistent approach to the structure of lessons, to include assessment for learning strategies. The planning, teaching and assessment were mostly effective. In lessons there is: planning that takes good account of the range of pupil ability and need within the class; judicious use of teaching resources; and the teachers are skillful in effective questioning to deepen challenge and allow for pupils to provide extended responses. At times, there was an over-reliance on the use of workbooks which limited the pupils' written responses. Across the College, the pupils' communication (oracy and written) skills and their wider skills and dispositions are underdeveloped. To improve further the quality of the provision in the classrooms and optimise the pupils' learning experiences, the planning for learning needs to take full account of the new time allocations for subject areas, as well as the range of pupil ability and need, keeping expectations high. Pupils would benefit from well-structured and sufficient opportunities to work together purposefully to develop wider skills. The pupils spoke to inspectors about enjoying opportunities to engage actively in lessons. The use of the College's online learning platform is valued by pupils.

There has been a timely review of the behaviour policy, again informed well by comprehensive consultation, including the pupils. The behaviour for learning policy was ratified in June 2024. The school is developing well strategies and programmes to support the holistic social, emotional and physical wellbeing of the pupils. For example, the Public Health Authority's 'Take 5' initiative signposts pupils to skills on how to deal with and overcome challenging situations; the College has been accredited as a Level 3 'Take 5' school. The pupils are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of how to keep safe in a digital world.

The personal and social development of the learners is being established mainly through learning for life and work, complemented by guest speakers and assemblies. A bespoke business studies and financial capability programme has been introduced for all year 10 pupils. The pupils reported to the inspectors that they welcomed the introduction of this programme to help them with managing money. Going forward, the school has prioritised suitably: the mapping of the preventative curriculum provision across all year groups; and the action to develop further the pastoral programme to incorporate dynamic issues that are current and important to the pupils.

### **C. BUILDING EQUITY**

The school provides a daily breakfast club throughout the year which is open to all; it is reported that it contributes to improved attendance, lower levels of anxiety for some pupils and a readiness to learn.

The processes for identifying pupils' needs in the school are effective, but a significant number of pupils are awaiting assessments, including with the EA's Educational Psychology Service, which is beyond the control of the school. While there is a commitment to building equity, the senior leaders report that resourcing interventions for pupils with SEN is a significant challenge to the College; staffing, accommodation and teaching resources are limited.

A SPiMS class has been established for a small group of pupils at KS 3. It is in its first year. Appropriate educational support is being provided to enable these pupils to follow the full curriculum. The personal learning plans provided to the inspectors are of a high quality and the pupils are making good progress to date. They are: benefitting from the structure and routine of a small group setting; learning to manage their behaviour and emotions; and growing in self-esteem.

The pupils with autism, or those pending a diagnosis, have access to a support programme which is highly inclusive and is building well the pupils' self-confidence and their social and communication skills. There is specialist teaching provided which supports well the pupils in a calm, structured and positive environment which is conducive to learning. The pupils are provided with strategies to manage their emotions and to settle into the new setting with clear, well-communicated routines.

The school's analysis of its internal data indicates that the pupils who have SEN make good progress; those who left in 2024 achieved well in public examinations and progressed to the next stage of learning or employment.



## **D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS**

Outcomes have improved since 2019 and have been consistent over the last three years. GCSE subject support has been provided for year 12 pupils at risk of underachieving. Importantly, the prioritisation of achievement and progress has included to good effect a targeted focus on supporting pupils at risk of not achieving both GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics at Grade C or above. The school's internal data indicates that the pupils' achievements in GCSE English and GCSE mathematics in 2024 exceeded their predicted outcomes.

In 2023/24, a significant minority of pupils progressed from year 12 to year 13 and almost all of year 13 pupils progressed to year 14. Most of the year 12 leavers progressed to further education, training or employment; a majority of year 14 leavers progressed to higher education and a minority progressed to further education, training or employment.

The pupils who met with inspectors reported that they have adjusted well to life in their new post-primary school; they feel welcomed in the College, are familiar with the new routines and are confident in the surroundings. They reported that the staff are kind and easy to talk to. Assessment information, in combination with free school meal entitlement data, is informing early interventionist support for a small group of year 8 pupils, with a focus on developing their skills at mathematical problem solving.

The College provides a range of leadership and mentoring opportunities. Recently, the pupils delivered a Fairtrade fundraising event and will manage a Christmas hamper project. Junior prefects have been re-established this year, recruited from year 10. They have received anti-bullying ambassador training; their activities include meeting with and mentoring year 8 pupils and supporting pupils in the playground. Some of the pupils who met with inspectors talked about knowing that the student council meets regularly but that they are unsure how to raise ideas for the council to consider or how it makes a difference. In the pupil questionnaire, a majority of the pupils responded that the student council works well to improve aspects of school life.

The pupils have a wide range of accomplishments in interschool competitions. The College has attained awards across many aspects of school life such as: Autism NI Impact Award Champion Status; British Council International School Award Certification and Young Enterprise Centre of Excellence. These awards are an indication of its commitment to the pupils.

## **E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING**

Almost all subject departments contribute to the extra-curricular provision which aims to meet a breadth of needs and interests of pupils. The provision enriches College life for the pupils, whether it is auditions currently running for the school musical, or the cookery club, basketball, the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) club, and the modern languages club. In discussions with inspectors, the pupils spoke about how they valued the opportunities to participate in the wide range of sports and extra-curricular classes. A majority of the pupils who responded to the questionnaire are proud to belong to the school community.

The College is a committed member of the area learning community (ALC) and takes a leadership role in promoting collaboration for teacher professional learning with colleagues from the other schools. The ALC has been proactive in inviting education authors to broaden staff's knowledge of particular teaching and learning strategies. It has been instrumental in progressing the College's anti-bullying work, including professional learning and policy review.

The College makes its high-quality onsite sporting facilities available to a neighbouring post-primary school. The physical environment is well-resourced and welcoming, with the College utilised as a shared civic space within the local community by a number of clubs and societies. Most of the parents who responded to the questionnaire indicated that the College has good links with other community organisations and clubs. Almost all of the teachers agree that the school has community links which impact positively on the pupils' learning experiences and outcomes.

There is a longstanding and growing collaboration with businesses in the locality, which is providing meaningful learning experiences for the pupils, including, input from visiting speakers, ongoing programmes of work experience for pupils in the care sector, and support for the College's end of year awards celebration.

The College instils in its pupils a strong social conscience which is connected to the College's core values and places a high value on its community connections. For example, pupils facilitate a highly popular community intergenerational Christmas party annually for the residents of four nursing homes, and the children of a local nursery school. The pupils are active in supporting a wide range of charities.

## **F. 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 school is aware of changes in arrangements for adult protection and this is reflected in the child and adult protection policy.

## **4. GOING FORWARD**

Parkhall Integrated College is undertaking a necessary, well-considered journey of improvement to address the areas for development it has identified appropriately and better achieve its new vision: 'To provide an inclusive, caring learning environment where we all feel valued and respected and are empowered to reach our full potential'. The implementation of the re-designed, more inclusive curriculum model now being delivered, and the continuing development of pedagogical practice are key aspects of this development work.

ETI will monitor the progress of Parkhall Integrated College in addressing the areas for action set out in this report. There will be a progress inspection.

This inspection has identified aspects of effective practice from which others may learn:

- the strategies being used to make modern languages accessible and relevant to all pupils; and
- the development of a bespoke business studies and financial capability programme for all year 10 pupils.

## 5. APPENDIX

### 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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