



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

**Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Dundonald High School
Belfast**

April 2015

FIFTH FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION DUNDONALD HIGH SCHOOL, BELFAST, BT16 1TH (421-0262)

In March 2007, a standard inspection of Dundonald High School reported that the quality of education was evaluated as inadequate. The areas for improvement identified were in leadership and management, including school development planning, and in standards in public examinations. The school was placed subsequently into the formal intervention process.

There ensued a series of four follow-up inspections (FUIs), during which the school exited the formal intervention process in 2009 only to re-enter it in 2012. The most recent FUI was in November 2013 when the important areas for improvement identified were the need:

- for a strong and significant focus, with external assistance, on capacity-building in leadership and management at all levels across the school;
- for the senior management team (SMT) to monitor more closely the target-setting process for pupils, and to evaluate the impact of the intervention strategies in order to bring about further improvement for pupils both individually and collectively; and
- to raise further the standards achieved in public examinations, which remain well below the NI average.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) produced a Development Proposal for the closure of Dundonald High School in April 2013. However, in January 2014 the Minister for Education announced that the school would remain open and that a programme of extra support would be put in place.

The support from the SEELB Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) has included the appointment of a support principal from another school working effectively at both individual and whole school level in vital areas such as leadership and management and learning and teaching. Key aspects of the support include an intensive series of classroom observations and feedback, the impact of which may be gauged by the consistently good or very good quality of the teaching observed in the course of the FUI. Furthermore, around two-thirds of the teachers have currently availed of the opportunities to visit other schools to observe effective practice. CASS has also provided training for governors, including a bespoke course with a particular emphasis on developing their challenge and support function.

The ETI carried out a fifth follow-up inspection in April 2015.

Building on the effective support from CASS, the following are the most important improvements since November 2013.

- The principal, who has been in an acting role since April 2013, was appointed permanently in March 2015, bringing a stability to the post, which now needs similarly to be extended to the wider senior management structure.
- The intensive focus on capacity-building at senior management level has led to a more rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation, resulting in a heightened level of scrutiny, accountability and support, in particular for those departments that are underperforming.

- The percentage of pupils obtaining grades A*-C at GCSE level in at least five subjects improved significantly, from 20% in 2012 to 50% in 2014; while this remains well below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools, the majority of these pupils entered the school not having attained the expected levels in English and mathematics.
- When GCSE English and GCSE mathematics are included, the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A*-C in at least five subjects has also increased significantly from 15% in 2012 to 37% in 2014, which is just above the NI average for similar schools.
- The percentage of pupils¹ entitled to free school meals achieving grades A*-C in five or more GCSE subjects including English and mathematics has increased from 0% in 2012 to 37% in 2014.
- The overall attendance of the pupils has increased from 84% in 2012 to 90% in 2014, which is almost in line with the NI average, the highest it has been since 1999; this improvement reflects the development amongst the pupils of more positive attitudes, skills and dispositions towards learning.
- Almost all of the lessons observed were good or better reflecting notable improvements in the quality of the learning and teaching.
- The choice of courses available to pupils, in particular at Key Stage (KS) 4, has widened with an increasing focus on meeting more closely their needs and interests.
- Internal and external performance data is being used more effectively to identify underperformance, effect intervention in learning and track the progress of the pupils.

The quality of education provided by the school is now satisfactory. The strengths, which continue to include the provision in the moderate learning unit, outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision.

The key areas for improvement which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the pupils are to:

- continue to raise standards in particular at KS4;
- continue to consolidate the capacity-building of leadership and management at all levels across the school; and
- develop further the roles and responsibilities of middle managers, including the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of their work on raising standards.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over the next 12 to 24 month period.

¹ Almost one-half of the enrolment of 252 (49%) are entitled to free school meals.

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