



*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

**Hunterhouse College
Belfast**

March 2015

FOLLOW-UP TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION OF HUNTERHOUSE COLLEGE, BELFAST, BT10 0LE (142-0065)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a standard inspection¹ of Hunterhouse College in April 2013, when the quality of education was evaluated as satisfactory. The report highlighted a range of strengths, including: the provision in careers education; special educational needs; aspects of pastoral care; the shared education programme; the pupils' acquisition of very good interpersonal skills; the effective mentoring arrangements; and most departments developing well their capacity for self-evaluation resulting in improvement.

The original standard inspection identified three key areas for improvement:

- to raise further the overall standards attained by the pupils in public examinations at grades A*-B at GCSE level and in general at GCE A level;
- improve further the quality of learning and teaching across the subject departments; and
- to build further the capacity of managers at all levels, through well targeted staff development to monitor, evaluate and review the provision systematically in order to bring about improvement.

The ETI carried out interim follow-up visits in November 2013, May 2014 and a follow-up inspection (FUI) in March 2015. The action plan produced by the school in response to the inspection findings is of a good quality and the school development plan is in line with the statutory requirements set out by the Department of Education. The school received support from a range of external services, and particularly from the Belfast Education and Library Board's advisory service in the effective analysis of value-added data to inform improvement. The Principal reported that he was very satisfied with the support provided.

The following changes which affect the work of the school have taken place since the standard inspection.

- The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals has risen from 7% to 12%.
- The leadership roles and responsibilities of members of the senior leadership team (SLT) have been clarified, which has assisted significantly in effecting improvement.
- Substantial changes in middle management, including the formation of school improvement teams and well-targeted staff development, have focused the attention of the middle managers on systematic action to improve standards and the effective linking of the pastoral and academic aspects of the school. As a result, the school is now demonstrating an effective capacity for sustained self-improvement.

¹ See standard inspection report at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/inspection-reports/inspection-reports-post-primary/inspection-reports-post-primary-2013/standard-inspection-hunterhouse-college-belfast.htm>

In the interval since the inspection, the most important improvements are outlined below.

- Planning, teaching and assessment to promote progression in the pupils' learning has improved significantly; over two-thirds of the lessons observed during the FUI were very good or outstanding. The best practice is characterised by active learning and excellent levels of pupil engagement and motivation.
- The standards in a majority of subjects at both GCSE and GCE A level have improved. While around one-half of all subjects offered at GCSE level show improved attainment at grades A* to B, the school needs to focus on improving further the proportion of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE grades at A* to C, which was 86% in 2014. The detailed and extensive good quality value-added data, however, analysed and provided by the school shows that the percentage of A*-B grades rose by 10% in 2014 when compared to attainment in 2013. The percentage of GCSE A*-A grades rose from 5% to 23.5% over the same period. Importantly, the school continues to measure and analyse a wide range of value-added measures and make necessary changes in teaching and learning.
- The percentage of pupils attaining three or more GCE A level at grades A* to C has increased from 57% in 2013 to 65% in 2014. However, this is still well below similar schools in the same free school meals category and needs to improve further.
- The quality of the provision for history, which was satisfactory at the time of the original inspection, is now good, with significant improvement in the quality of the planning, teaching, learning and outcomes.
- The quality of provision for science, which was originally satisfactory, is now good as a consequence of improved standards in public examinations, the greater challenge and support provided for the pupils and the more robust evaluation of classroom practice.
- The post-16 curriculum and examination entry policy has been tailored to meet the needs, interests and abilities of all the pupils more effectively, leading to improved standards and progression opportunities. The school has developed an effective study skills and pastoral support programme which meets better the pastoral and academic needs of the pupils.
- The use and analysis of value added data to measure and demonstrate more clearly the value which the school adds to the pupils' progress. This has been led well by the Principal and senior leadership team.

The area for improvement is:

- to sustain, and build on, the improvements in both the quality of the pupils' learning experiences and their attainments in public examinations.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is now good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress in addressing the area for improvement.

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