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*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

**Monkstown Community School and Learning Support Centre
Newtownabbey**

May 2014

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF MONKSTOWN COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE, NEWTOWNABBEY, CO ANTRIM, BT37 0EA (321-0200)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a standard inspection¹ of Monkstown Community School and Learning Support Centre in November 2012 when the overall quality of provision was evaluated as unsatisfactory.

The inspection identified areas for improvement, which included the need for:

- teachers to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve and to improve the inadequate quality of the pastoral and curricular experiences of the pupils;
- the inadequate standards achieved by the pupils, particularly the levels of attainment in public examinations, to be improved;
- school leaders to implement effective processes for self-evaluation and school development planning leading to the identification of appropriate priorities and the associated actions necessary to effect improvement; and
- the roles and responsibilities of leadership and management at all levels, including the role of the governors, to be reviewed, clarified and strengthened so as to ensure that rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of provision is undertaken and the actions taken lead to improvement.

ETI carried out two interim follow up visits which confirmed that the action plan produced by the school in response to the inspection findings was of a good quality.

In the interval since the inspection, the school has received significant support from a range of services from the North Eastern Education and Library Board. The principal and the chair of the board of governors reported that they were satisfied with the level of support provided to the school.

At the time of the follow-up inspection, carried out in May 2014, the school did not have in place a school development plan and, therefore, does not meet the statutory requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

The following are the most important changes that have taken place since the standard inspection:

- in February 2014, the Minister for Education agreed that provision at the school would cease from 31 August 2014, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- the enrolment has decreased over the past two years, reducing from 635 to 552;
- a review and clarification of roles and responsibilities at all levels has been carried out;

¹ See inspection report at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/inspection-reports/inspection-reports-post-primary/inspection-reports-post-primary-2013/standard-inspection-monkstown-community-school-co-antrim.htm>

- there has been a restructuring of the board of governors, including the addition of new members and the setting up of sub-committees to address various aspects of the work of the school; and
- the entry requirements for pupils to access GCE/Level 3 courses in year 13 have been increased.

The most important improvements since the standard inspection include the:

- quality of learning and teaching observed during the follow-up visit, which was good or very good in the majority of the lessons;
- enhancement of the curriculum at key stage 4, which is tailored better to meet the needs, interests and abilities of the pupils;
- introduction of an agreed structure to monitoring and evaluating by heads of department of the provision in their respective areas, including the introduction of a robust system for monitoring and reporting on pupil progress;
- governors having a greater awareness of their roles and responsibilities and being more actively involved with, and engaged in, the process of school improvement;
- attendance which improved from 88% to 90%, although this remains below the NI average for similar schools;
- improved structures for harnessing pupil and parent views on aspects of the life and work of the school which affect them; and
- significant improvement in the overall ethos and climate for learning.

At the time of the original inspection, the provision for English and mathematics were evaluated as inadequate. The provision for mathematics is now satisfactory, with improvement in the quality of the leadership, learning, teaching and assessment. The provision for English remains inadequate, with a need to improve consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the department.

The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance, particularly in key stage 4, has improved and is now satisfactory. These pupils have a greater knowledge and understanding of the career pathways available to them. The quality of SEN provision has also improved and is now satisfactory. The teachers are provided with useful information on the nature of the specific learning needs of the pupils; they now need to use this information more effectively to inform their classroom practice to ensure consistency in the quality of the learning experiences for these pupils.

In 2012, 44% of the pupils attained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C: this figure is now 40%. In 2012, 17% of the pupils attained five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics at grades A* to C; this figure is now 14%. While there is some variation in GCSE standards across the subjects; these standards are well below the average for similar schools and remain too low.

The quality of the sixth form provision remains unsatisfactory. While the standards attained by the very small number of pupils who undertake GCE A level study are generally good, the curricular experiences offered to them are too limited to prepare the pupils adequately for the next stage of their learning, work or employment. It continues to be important that the employing authority, governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school's sixth form provision in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is now inadequate. The follow-up inspection has identified areas for improvement which need to be addressed if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the pupils.

The main areas for improvement are to:

- continue to raise the expectations of what the pupils can achieve and the standards they attain, particularly in the pupils' literacy skills;
- disseminate further the best practice in planning, learning, teaching and assessment within the school; and
- develop a more shared and cohesive approach to school improvement through effective school development planning in order to ensure that the actions taken lead to improvement.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will carry out a further follow-up inspection within the next 12-18 months.

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