

eti

*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

**Newtownabbey Community High School
Co Antrim**

September 2012

FOLLOW-UP TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION OF NEWTOWNABBEY COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL, CO ANTRIM, BT37 9AD (321-0279)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a standard inspection of Newtownabbey Community High School in September 2010 when the overall quality of provision was evaluated as satisfactory. This inspection highlighted the following strengths: the positive ethos that permeates the work of the school; the well-behaved and mannerly pupils; the productive links established with the local community; the effective leadership of the middle managers, in particular, in the subject areas under focus; the comprehensive analysis of the quantitative data associated with pupil attainment and standards carried out by the Vice-principal; and the commitment of the (acting) Principal to the life and work of the school and his on-going efforts to increase the enrolment.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to raise the standards achieved by the pupils at General Certificate of Secondary Education;
- to improve further the quality of learning and teaching; and
- to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the school's policies, practices and procedures, and to review urgently the roles and responsibilities of the staff.

In the interval since the standard inspection, significant staffing changes have taken place including the appointment of a new Principal, the restructuring of the leadership team and the appointment of a curriculum co-ordinator.

The Inspectorate carried out two interim follow-up visits and a follow-up inspection on 24 and 25 September 2012. At the time of the follow-up inspection, one in four of the teaching staff were substitute teachers who are being supported and managed well by the leadership team.

The action plans produced by the school in response to the inspection findings were of a good quality.

The school development plan was adjusted, with support from the North Eastern Education and Library Board advisors, in light of the inspection findings. It now complies with the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 and the associated action plans provide strategic direction for the continued work of the school. All members of the school community, including the pupils, were involved in the setting of the targets and they participate actively in the regular review of progress.

The following are the most important improvements since the standard inspection:

- the effective, collegiate, whole-school approach to school improvement under the effective leadership of the Principal;
- the expectations of all of the teachers and of all the pupils are higher and there is a sharper whole-school focus on learning and teaching;
- the parents are engaged more actively with the school in supporting their children's learning and, as a result, the pupils' attendance has improved.

- attendance has improved by 4.5% and is currently at 88.2% which is still 3% below the NI average for non-selective schools. The school has identified appropriately the need to continue to improve attendance rates;
- all staff have benefited from training in promoting positive behaviour, as a result of which suspension rates have fallen by 90% in 3 years;
- pupil progress is monitored and tracked effectively by all of the teachers throughout the school year and, in years 11-12, the pupils are supported well by an effective mentoring programme;
- individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are now of a very good quality and their use informs well lesson planning and classroom practice;
- the quality of the learning and teaching has improved from the time of the original inspection, with nearly three-quarters of the lessons observed during the follow-up inspection being good or better; and
- the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C increased from 38% in 2010 to 55% in 2012 which is well above the average for similar schools; the percentage achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, when English and mathematics are included, increased from 15% in 2010 to 21% in 2012, which is average for similar schools and, in 2012, no pupil left the school without a GCSE qualification or equivalent.

The school has identified appropriately the need to improve the standards attained by the pupils in GCSE English which remain inadequate.

CONCLUSION

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school remains satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision.

The organisation has demonstrated evidence of some improvement but the following areas for improvement remain to be addressed if the needs of all of the pupils are to be met effectively:

- to sustain and build further on the recent improvement to the standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations, in particular, through developing a whole-school approach to raise the pupils' literacy skills; and
- to disseminate more effectively the very good and outstanding learning and teaching practice which exists within the school.

The school is currently operating with a significant financial deficit. It is important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

The ETI will carry out a second follow-up inspection within 12 months and a report will be published.

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