



*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

**St Brigid's High School
Armagh**

February 2014

A FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ST BRIGID'S HIGH SCHOOL, ARMAGH, BT60 4BR (523-0160)

The standard inspection of St Brigid's High School in October 2010 evaluated the provision as satisfactory and identified areas for improvement in standards at GCSE level, including English, mathematics and careers education, school development planning and in the curriculum provided.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection (FUI) of St Brigid's High School in March 2012 which highlighted strengths in the quality of teaching in most lessons, the strong pastoral support for pupils, the exemplary behaviour of the pupils and their positive attitudes to learning, and the strong links the school has with a wide range of external agencies to enrich the learning experiences of the pupils.

The inspection found that the provision for the careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) had improved and that there is a wider curriculum provision due to more effective collaboration with other local post-primary schools.

The inspection identified the need for further improvement in key areas, including the need to:

- develop coherent approaches to school development planning, particularly in the effective use of target-setting based on rigorous self-evaluation in order to support those pupils at risk of underachievement;
- improve the outcomes for pupils at GCSE level, which were very low; and
- improve the quality of the provision in English, which was satisfactory, and to implement more coherent approaches to literacy across the school.

The FUI report also reiterated that the Department of Education, the employing authority, Governors and staff plan for and manage issues relating to the sustainability of the school.

A second FUI was carried out on 6 and 7 February 2014. Recent changes that affect the work of the school include the:

- planned closure of the school in 2014, which has reached an advanced stage;
- appointment of a new chairperson of the board of governors;
- appointment of an acting principal in 2012;
- formation of a 'quality learning and teaching' team;
- appointment of a head of the mathematics department in October 2013; and
- whole-school focus on the priorities set out in the revised school development plans.

The school has received support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service of the Southern Education and Library Board and from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, and has made significant progress in addressing the areas identified.

The main improvements since March 2012 are the:

- quality of the provision in CEIAG, which is very good;
- quality of the provision in English, which is good;
- more effective collaboration with schools in the area learning community in order to broaden further the curriculum;
- school development planning, which incorporates more collegial working practices, including the use of data to identify those pupils at risk of underachievement;
- whole-school use of data to set baselines for pupil achievement, provide support, track progress and provide information on improvement in the outcomes for each pupil;
- the skilful and sensitive management of transitional arrangements for the year 10 pupils progressing to St Patrick's grammar school; and
- the opportunities for pupils to be supported in their learning through after-school activities and initiatives, which inform and engage the parents.

In 2011, 37% of the pupils achieved 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C. There has been steady improvement over the past three years to 53%, which remains over ten percentage points below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools.

The number of pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades, including English and mathematics, has remained consistently low over the past three years. In 2011, the percentage of pupils achieving at that level was almost 16%; in 2013 the percentage improved to approximately 19%, which remains six percentage points below the NI average for similar non-selective schools. This is due largely to low outcomes in mathematics at GCSE level.

The school has worked strategically to address the issues raised in the previous inspection reports; there are a significant number of strengths in the provision, which outweigh the areas for improvement.

The quality of education provided by the school remains satisfactory.

The area for further improvement remains the need to develop a more consistent approach to learning across the whole school in order to bring about sustained improvement in the standards attained in public examinations.

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