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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**

**St Columba's College  
Portaferry**

**October 2010**

## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION OF ST COLUMBA'S COLLEGE, PORTAFERRY, CO DOWN, BT22 1RB (423-0067)**

The standard inspection of St Columba's College, Portaferry in November 2007, highlighted strengths in the school's provision that included: the leadership and commitment of the Principal and the Vice-principal; the work of the industrious and dedicated teachers and the examples of very good teaching observed; the good relationships between the teachers and the pupils evident in almost all classes and the care and welfare of the pupils; the high standing of the school in the local community; the standards achieved by the pupils in most subjects; and the use of information on pupils' performance to raise standards.

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

- the need to review the School Development Plan to include appropriate action plans focused on guiding leaders, at all levels, to implement, monitor and evaluate improvement;
- the need to review the curriculum provided to increase the range of options available to the pupils, and provide flexible pathways to study in further and higher education; and
- the need to provide a coherent programme for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) matched closely to the pupils' individual needs and aptitudes, as identified by the school, and confirmed by the inspection.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the decrease in the school enrolment from 271 to 236;
- the phased withdrawal of the sixth-form provision, with no sixth form provision at present;
- the reduction in the number of teaching staff from 24 to 19;
- the introduction of the Training for Success programme at National Vocational Qualification level I;
- the active involvement of the school in the North Down and Ards Area Learning Community;
- the move from a 46 to a 50 period week in order to provide additional time for CEIAG;
- the appointment of a CEIAG co-ordinator;
- the training for all pupils and staff in the use of interactive careers guidance software;
- the integration of the use of personal career plans within the careers programme;
- the systematic and rigorous use of internal and external data by staff in all departments to set targets, in order to monitor and evaluate the pupils' progress against a suitable range of benchmarking indicators;

- the continued hard work and commitment of the staff focused well on embedding a culture and ethos of self-evaluation;
- the dissemination of good practice by staff through the implementation of 'sharing of good practice days'; and
- the increased involvement of the governors in monitoring overseeing the standards attained by the pupils.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out two monitoring visits, and then a follow-up inspection which was carried out on the 7 and 8 October 2010.

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

The school's development plan was adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The development plan now meets the statutory requirements as set out by Department of Education.

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

- the school development plan was reviewed and now includes effective action plans and rigorous self-evaluative processes which guide well the leadership and management at all levels in their implementation, monitoring and evaluation of improvement;
- the broad and flexible programme at key stage (KS) 3 and KS4 which meets the needs of the pupils; and
- the effective and coherent programme for CEIAG which caters well for the needs and aptitudes of the pupils.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is now very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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