



*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**

**Banbridge High School  
Co Down**

**Inspection Letter**

**February 2012**

## **INSPECTION OF BANBRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL (521-0047) – 27-29 FEBRUARY 2012**

### **INSPECTION LETTER**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) notified Banbridge High School of its forthcoming inspection scheduled for 27-29 February 2012. Prior to the inspection, the school informed ETI that a majority of its teachers would not be co-operating with Inspectors on advice from two of the teaching unions. The teachers are involved in action short of strike in relation to pay, pensions, terms and conditions of employment and reductions in the education budget.

The Inspectors spent three days in the school on the above dates and were able to:

- observe learning and teaching in a small proportion of lessons;
- evaluate aspects of the provision for mathematics and careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG);
- evaluate the quality of samples of the pupils' work in a minority of subjects;
- scrutinise some of the school's documentation, and the planning for a minority of curricular areas;
- meet with groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14 to discuss the arrangements for safeguarding, pastoral care, healthy eating and careers guidance;
- evaluate the effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding;
- hold discussions with the Principal and members of Senior Management Team regarding leadership and management, the school's improvement planning processes, pastoral care, safeguarding, CEIAG, assessment, standards, accommodation and finances;
- meet representatives of the Board of Governors to hear their views on the life and work of the school and discuss their role in supporting and promoting school improvement;
- discuss with a minority of the heads of department their actions to promote improvement, including departmental self-evaluation;
- report to the Principal and representatives of the governors the key messages from the parents, teaching staff and support staff questionnaires;
- analyse and report on the school's performance in public examinations over the past three years; and
- observe the pupils' behaviour inside the school building and outside in the school grounds.

Owing to the non co-operation of three-fifths of the teachers, the Inspectors were not able to assess fully the quality of learning for the pupils to identify areas where provision is strong or where improvements are needed.

They were not able to:

- evaluate the quality of leadership and management overall;
- observe and evaluate the quality of the learning and teaching in a majority of the classes;
- observe directly the majority of the pupils at work or talk to them about their work;
- assess the quality and impact of the taught programme for personal development and the overall quality of the working relationships between the pupils and the staff during lessons;
- evaluate the progress being made towards the implementation of the entitlement framework;
- evaluate the quality of the care, guidance and support, including the provision for those pupils with special educational needs;
- evaluate a few remaining aspects of the mathematics and CEIAG programme;
- evaluate all aspects of the provision for English and geography; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the majority of the middle management group of staff.

## CONTEXT

The enrolment of Banbridge High School has increased over the past three years and stands currently at 676. The year 8 intake has decreased over the same period and is currently 95 pupils. There are 76 pupils in the sixth form. Approximately 18% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school identifies 17% of the pupils as having special educational needs and there are nine newcomer pupils. The school includes a learning support centre with 52 pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. The principal has been in post since 2009.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

ETI was able to evaluate the school's standards in public examinations.

Over the past three years, the pupils attained inadequate General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) outcomes, well below the NI average for similar non-selective schools at grades A\*-C, both for pupils taking GCSE and equivalent examinations in at least 5 subjects and for pupils taking at least 5 GCSE subjects, including English and Mathematics.

In the past three years, 45.46% of the pupils attained grade A\*-C in mathematics, which is above the Northern Ireland average for similar schools. Over the same period, 51.45% attained grade A\*-C in English which is just below the NI average for similar schools. Over the past three years more than one quarter of subjects at GCSE level exceeded the NI average by 10% or more; almost half were within 5% of the average and one seventh were more than 10% below.

Over the same period, 90% of the pupils were entered for GCSE mathematics and 82% for GCSE English. The percentage entry figures are too low and while the proportion entered is improving (and at a faster rate in mathematics than in English) a higher proportion of the pupils need to take GCSE subjects to enable them to achieve and progress in line with their abilities and career aspirations.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Following his appointment in 2009, the Principal took immediate, decisive and necessary action to review and amend the school's examination entry policy to ensure that the pupils have a much greater degree of access to accredited qualifications. This inspection endorses this as an urgent, continuing priority.

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The school needs, however, to:

- ensure that the written Code of Conduct currently under development is formalised and embedded fully across the school;
- enhance the quality of information on school notice boards to ensure that all pupils understand fully the work and role of the designated teachers; and
- review and update the discipline policy to one which promotes positive behaviour.

The school has an increasing and substantial projected budget deficit over the next three years which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

## CONCLUSION

The school's inspection is incomplete. ETI will return as soon as possible, and with little or no additional notice, to complete the inspection and to issue a published report. This will include undertaking all of the aspects which were not possible during this incomplete inspection.

ETI has reported its interim findings visit to the Board of Governors, the Principal and a representative of the Employing Authority. The interim findings from this incomplete inspection have been mediated to the school.

## APPENDIX 1

The arrangements for the inspection included:

- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire to the inspection;
- meetings with representatives from the governors; and
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	136	45	33.1	26
Teachers	----	19	----	6
Support Staff	----	12	----	*

\* = fewer than 5

---- = unknown

Almost all of the parental responses were positive and affirmative of the work of the school. In particular the parental responses identified that the school encourages pupils to behave well and provides good opportunities for pupils to participate in out-of-school activities. The returns from the few questionnaires completed by the teachers and support staff were nearly all very positive. The ETI reported to representatives of the governors and the Principal the few areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires.

Nearly all of the pupils with whom discussions were held talked positively about their experiences in school; all of them talked about their enjoyment of extra-curricular activities. The pupils reported that they feel safe and that there are members of staff they could speak to if they had any concerns about their safety or wellbeing.

The chair of the board of governors reported her commitment to improving further the standards achieved in the school. In particular, she spoke positively of the work of the Principal since his appointment in raising standards.

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