



*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

**Devenish College
Enniskillen**

Inspection Letter

April 2015

INSPECTION OF DEVENISH COLLEGE, ENNISKILLEN (221-0312)
27-28 APRIL 2015

INSPECTION LETTER

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) notified Devenish College of its forthcoming inspection scheduled for week commencing 27 April 2015 in line with its standard inspection notification protocols. Prior to the inspection, the school informed ETI that one-quarter of the senior leadership team and almost all (91%) of its teaching staff would not be co-operating with inspectors on advice from one of the teaching unions. These teachers are involved in action short of strike in relation to reductions in the education budget.

The Inspectors were able to:

- observe learning and teaching in a small number (5) of lessons;
- evaluate the quality of samples of the pupils' work across a range of subjects at key stage (KS) 3 and KS4;
- scrutinise some of the school's documentation, including the school development plan, associated action plans and a range of whole-school policies and strategies;
- evaluate to a limited extent some aspects of the provision for English and literacy and mathematics and numeracy;
- analyse and report on the school's performance in public examinations in 2014;
- meet with groups of pupils across all of the year groups to talk about their learning experiences and to discuss the arrangements for safeguarding, pastoral care and careers guidance;
- hold discussions with the Principal and some members of the senior leadership team regarding leadership and management, the school's improvement planning processes, pastoral care, safeguarding, curriculum provision, standards and accommodation;
- meet representatives of the Board of Governors to hear their views on the life and work of the school, and to discuss their role in supporting and promoting school improvement;
- report to the Principal and representatives of the governors the key messages from the small number of parents, teaching staff and support staff questionnaires which were returned; and
- observe the pupils' behaviour inside the school building and outside in the school grounds.

Owing to the non co-operation of one-quarter of the senior leadership team and almost all of the teachers, the Inspectors were not able to assess fully the quality of education provided for the pupils to identify areas where provision is strong or where improvements are needed.

The Inspectors were not able to:

- evaluate the quality of leadership and management at all levels;
- evaluate the quality of the self-evaluation and action planning processes in a majority of the curriculum areas;
- evaluate conclusively the arrangements for safeguarding;
- observe and evaluate the quality of the learning and teaching in the vast majority of the classes;
- evaluate the quality of planning for most of the curricular areas;
- evaluate how effective the assessment arrangements are in promoting learning;
- assess the overall quality of the working relationships between the pupils and the staff;
- observe directly the majority of the pupils at work or to talk to them about their work in the classrooms;
- evaluate the extent to which the majority of the pupils acquire and develop effective personal and social skills, dispositions and capabilities;
- evaluate the quality of the care, guidance and support, including the pastoral care provision and the provision for those pupils with special educational needs;
- evaluate conclusively the quality of the curriculum provision at KS3, KS4 and post-16; and
- evaluate most aspects of the provision for English, mathematics and careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG).

CONTEXT

Devenish College is a controlled, co-educational, non-selective school catering for pupils from 11-18 years of age. Located in the town of Enniskillen it was formed in September 2013 following the amalgamation of Lisnaskea High School and the existing Devenish College. At the time of the amalgamation, both schools were involved in the follow-up inspection process as a result of the outcomes of prior inspections (Devenish College was inspected in May 2011 and was evaluated as satisfactory; Lisnaskea High School was inspected in April 2012 and was also evaluated as satisfactory). As a result of the amalgamation, the follow-up inspections were cancelled and replaced by this baseline inspection of the new school.

In the two years since the amalgamation, the enrolment has declined from 537 in 2013 to the current enrolment of 509 which includes 90 pupils in the sixth form, 17 of whom are following a one-year course at Level 2. Approximately 40% of the pupils have been identified by the school as requiring support with aspects of their learning, 63 of whom have a statement of educational need. There are six newcomer pupils and 27% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

Achievements and standards

In literacy, the evidence from the pupils' KS3 and KS4 work scrutinised shows that they have opportunities to write in different forms and to read for information. Assessment for learning has been introduced but needs to be further developed and used more consistently across the English department. In the pupils' written work, the quality of the written expression was variable as was the marking for improvement. Across the subjects, there are too many examples of poor levels of literacy which is not being addressed adequately by the subject teachers.

In numeracy, the samples of pupils' work indicate that they follow a broad and balanced mathematics curriculum which, based on the evidence at the time of the inspection, is of an appropriate standard. However, the teachers' monitoring of the pupils' work, including their self-marking and correcting, is insufficiently rigorous and not good enough in too many of the books examined. The quality of the presentation by the pupils of their work also needs to improve in a minority of the books scrutinised.

Due to the amalgamation in September 2013, data on the pupils' performance in public examinations was available for only one cohort of the pupils. In 2014, 60% of the pupils achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C, which is below the average for similar non-selective schools. In the same year, 42% of the pupils achieved five or more GCSE passes including English and mathematics, which is above the NI average for non-selective schools but below that achieved by non-selective schools in the same free school meals band.

Around 25% of the pupils on free school meals attain five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. While this is in line with the low NI average, the attainment of these pupils is well below that of their peers and needs to be more thoroughly investigated and addressed by the school.

In 2014, the pupils performed very well in the GCE A level examinations, with 68% of them achieving three or more A levels at grades A* to C; this is significantly above the NI average for non-selective schools.

Quality of provision

In the significant majority of the pupils' work sampled and scrutinised, the quality and consistency of it varied considerably. While many examples of high quality work were examined, where it is clear the pupils take much pride in its quality and presentation, too much of the work goes unmarked and without affirmation from the teachers. Some examples of effective assessment and marking for improvement were observed in the pupils' work, but it is concerning that in around one-half of the books scrutinised there is too little evidence of effective marking on a whole-school basis. In addition, the quality of the feedback from too many of the teachers to either affirm good work or provide feedback to inform and track improvement is inadequate; the monitoring and tracking of the pupils' progress requires significant attention.

There are significant gaps and inconsistencies across the subjects in the extent, regularity and quality of the pupils' homework. The evidence is clear that the monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' work by the middle managers is inadequate.

The curriculum at KS3 is broad and balanced; at KS4, the curriculum meets the requirements of the Entitlement Framework and is implemented flexibly to meet the abilities and career aspirations of the pupils. The school is increasing the offer of vocational subjects in year 11.

At post-16, the school is not currently meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. It offers collaborative subjects through the Fermanagh Learning Community and a number of pupils travel to other schools and the local campus of the further education college to access post-16 courses.

During discussions with inspectors, the pupils reported that teachers were very approachable and that relationships with them were mostly good. The pupils reported an appreciation of the available counselling service and that they had access to, and valued, the good range of extra-curricular provision. The senior pupils appreciate being able to access part of their curriculum outside of the school and the opportunity to gain relevant work experience. The pupils reported some concerns, including persistent instances of disruptive behaviour in class and around the school, a lack of feedback on their work and inconsistency in the allocation and marking of homework. The pupils reported that they feel safe and that they know the members of staff they could speak to if they had any concerns about their safety or well-being.

Leadership and management

While the school development plan (SDP) is structured and presented according to the guidance provided by the Department of Education, it is not sufficiently based on robust enough processes of consultation or self-evaluation and there is a clear disconnect with the evidence from this partial inspection. The level of coherence between the small number of action plans provided to Inspectors and the priorities identified in the school development plan is low. The SDP, its associated actions and the departmental action plans need to be reviewed in light of the findings from this partial inspection.

The whole-school policies for literacy, numeracy and learning and teaching are dated and require significant attention. In literacy and numeracy, for example, the draft policies need to focus more clearly on the school's specific strategies for progressing, measuring and monitoring the pupils' acquisition and application of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, and in particular for those pupils identified as requiring additional support with their learning.

The overall standard and effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation by the middle and senior managers of key aspects of whole-school work, including the various policies, strategies and departmental action plans, are inadequate.

The governors reported on the difficult post-amalgamation context of the school, the associated staff redundancies and the poor quality of the accommodation and overall school fabric. They are aware of the priorities of the school and indicated their commitment to raising standards. There is a need for the governors to ensure greater accountability and challenge at all levels of management.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the indications are that the arrangements for safeguarding broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. However, the Inspectors did not have sufficient access to all of the necessary information or key staff involved and the arrangements for safeguarding need to be revisited and re-evaluated when the inspection is completed.

CONCLUSION

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

ETI has reported the findings in this letter to the Board of Governors, the Principal and representatives of the Employing Authority.

APPENDIX

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, 9, 10, 11,12, 13 and 14.

Questionnaire	Number	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	410	11	3%	7
Teachers	46	7	15%	*
Teaching Support Staff	27	*	*	*
Support Staff	7	*	*	*

* Fewer than 5

Almost all of the responses and written comments from the small number of parental questionnaires returned were positive and affirmative of the work of the school. The parents commented positively on their satisfaction with the quality of the education provided and the support given to their children. The small number of returns from the questionnaires completed by the teachers and support staff were generally positive. The ETI reported to representatives of the governors and the Principal the few areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires.

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