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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Balmoral High School
Belfast**

January 2007

SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAMME (SSP) FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION OF BALMORAL HIGH SCHOOL, BELFAST (121-0288)

The inspection, carried out at the school's point of entry to the SSP in October 2005 highlighted a number of strengths. These included: the commitment of many teachers to begin to address the significant challenges facing the school; the sound or better quality of teaching observed in the majority of lessons; the attempts to improve standards in literacy and numeracy at key stage (KS) 3, and the work of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) in addressing the needs of those pupils with significant educational, social and behavioural difficulties. The inspection also identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to address the serious weaknesses in the quality and effectiveness of the leadership;
- to implement fully, as a matter of urgency, the guidance in the Department of Education (DE) Circulars 1999/10 and 2003/13, in relation to Child Protection matters;
- to plan and implement a broader range of teaching and learning strategies which are matched more effectively to the needs and abilities of all of the pupils, and are designed to improve the standards achieved by the pupils;
- to improve the quality of the teaching and the pupils' learning experiences in a significant minority of the classes and, in particular, the teaching evaluated to be unsatisfactory; and
- to provide, across all levels of management, effective monitoring and evaluation of agreed strategies to improve behaviour, and the pupils' standards in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), and in external examinations.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out a follow-up inspection in January 2007. In the interval since the inspection, the following action, which affects the work of the school, has taken place:

- a new senior management team has been established consisting of an acting principal and two senior teachers; and
- the roles and responsibilities of those teachers who hold middle management posts have been reviewed.

The school has made satisfactory progress in improving aspects of its provision and the following are the most important improvements which have taken place since the initial SSP inspection:

- the senior management team, with the support of the Belfast Education and Library Board, has produced useful action plans to guide development in the areas identified for improvement;
- under the skilful guidance of a senior teacher, a system to promote good behaviour amongst the pupils and encourage a positive attitude towards learning has been agreed and is being implemented;
- opportunities have been provided for members of the teaching staff to observe models of good classroom practice;

- a new policy for child protection has been initiated effectively by the designated senior teacher; the guidance from DE Circulars 1999/10 and 2003/13, in relation to child protection matters is being implemented in the classrooms; and
- appropriate training and development for staff has been initiated on the main issues identified in the inspection report.

The Inspectorate is aware that there may be a development proposal to close Balmoral High School by August 2008. This proposal has not been ratified at present. In order to improve the outcomes for the pupils currently attending the school, there remains a need to:

- develop and implement a broader range of teaching and learning strategies matched to the needs, interests and abilities of all of the pupils to improve the standards achieved;
- develop further the monitoring and evaluation procedures aimed at promoting a more rigorous reflection on current classroom practice and school improvement; and
- clarify responsibility for, and provide, child protection training for staff employed by the facilities management organisation to include, premises and dining centre personnel.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will continue to monitor the work of the school to ensure that the improvements which are needed are implemented.

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