



*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

**Belfast High School
Newtownabbey**

December 2009

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF BELFAST HIGH SCHOOL, NEWTOWNABBEY, CO ANTRIM, BT37 0PX (342-0077)

The standard and specialist school baseline inspection in Belfast High School, Newtownabbey in January 2008, highlighted strengths in the very good quality of the provision for pastoral care, the good standards achieved by the pupils at General Certificate of Secondary Education level, the breadth of curricular provision at key stage 4 and post-16 level and the effective communication and reporting structures between the governors and the Principal. The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the need to promote greater consistency in teaching approaches within and across departments to enable the pupils to become more independent and take more responsibility for their own learning; and
- the need to develop a more rigorous self-evaluative process for monitoring and developing the effectiveness of learning and teaching, including through the implementation of the plans for the school's specialist status.

The specialist school's baseline inspection specifically recommended that, for the purpose of showing improvement more clearly the school needs to review the targets set in order to be able to demonstrate, in a measurable way, how:

- the strengths in modern languages have the potential to promote quality teaching and learning and whole-school development;
- the strategic management of the specialist school status can envision, guide and support staff in target setting, evaluating, and in action planning; and
- the school will use modern languages to develop existing links with the wider community, including business and industry.

In September 2008 and in September 2009, the school submitted a report to the Department of Education (DE) in which it indicated that some of the year 1 and year 2 targets which the school had set itself had been achieved, good progress was being made on others, and yet others had not been achieved.

In the interval since the inspection, the following action which affects the work of the school has taken place:

- the appointment of a new Vice-principal; and
- visits to a range of organisations to observe best practice.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out two interim follow-up inspection visits and subsequently a follow-up inspection on the 3 December 2009.

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

The school development plan (SDP) has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The SDP meets the statutory requirements as set out by DE.

The following are the most important improvements since the standard and specialist school baseline inspection:

- the quality of the teaching seen during the follow-up inspection was mostly very good, and in a minority of lessons outstanding;
- the consistent use, across all departments, of a very wide range of teaching and learning strategies to promote the pupils' independence in learning;
- the more robust and agreed systems in place for self-evaluation, which is used consistently across the school; and
- the very good use being made of data to set realistic targets, track the pupil's learning, and identify areas for further development, including within the schools specialism in modern languages.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is now good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The follow-up inspection has identified some aspects of the areas for improvement still to be addressed but equally the school has demonstrated the capacity to address these.

The Inspectorate will continue to monitor the school's continued progress as part of the Specialist Schools' Programme.

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