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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Down Academy
Downpatrick**

February 2008

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF DOWN ACADEMY, DOWNPATRICK, CO DOWN, BT30 6SG (425-0272)

The standard inspection in November 2005 highlighted strengths in the welcoming and inclusive community atmosphere, the very good working relationships between the adults and pupils, the helpful support given to pupils with special educational needs, the strong integration of pupils with special educational needs and the quality of the teaching. The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to improve leadership and management at all levels;
- to make more effective use of quantitative and qualitative information to improve the quality of learning and teaching, including the development of appropriate self-evaluation processes; and
- to disseminate the good practice within the school.

At the time of the follow-up inspection there was a proposed change to the context of the school. The South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) had published proposals to close the school, and to establish a new amalgamated Grant Maintained Integrated College. This process has been a protracted one, and dealing with the situation has taken up a considerable amount of the Principal's time, and brought a great deal of uncertainty to the staff, pupils and parents. A quick resolution to this situation would be in the best interests of the pupils, staff and parents.

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

- a new senior management team was established;
- a curriculum team was established; and
- an examinations officer and a head of pastoral care were appointed.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out two monitoring visits and a follow-up inspection on 22 February 2008.

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

- the good work of the curriculum team, the examinations officer and the head of pastoral care in leading and managing the work to address the identified areas for improvement;
- the more effective use made of the quantitative and qualitative information;
- the sound start made to disseminating elements of good practice including the use of learning intentions to structure lessons and the introduction of thinking skills and personal capabilities to lesson planning; and

- the effective dissemination of strategies to raise standards including the pupils' achievements in public examinations.

Since the inspection, the school evaluated the progress made in the areas for improvement identified in the original inspection. The Inspectorate recommends that the processes for self-evaluation are developed to focus more strongly on self-evaluation as a means to bring about improvement.

The follow-up inspection findings confirm that the school has demonstrated evidence of improvement but some areas for improvement remain to be addressed.

The school's progress in the continuing areas for improvement will be followed-up by the District Inspector.

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