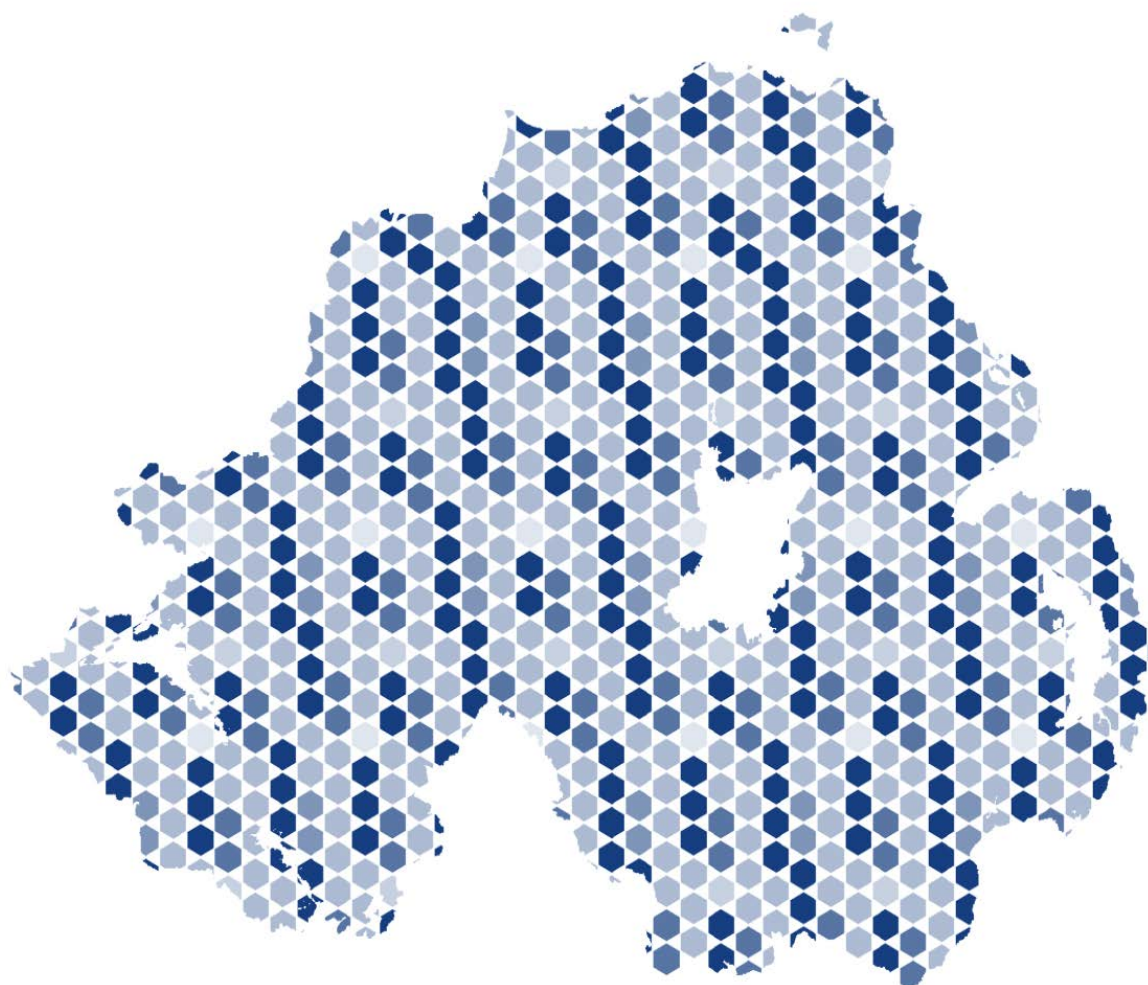


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Fivemiletown College,
Fivemiletown, County Tyrone

Controlled, Co-educational 11-18 school

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
in October 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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CUSTOMER
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FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF FIVEMILETOWN COLLEGE, COUNTY TYRONE, BT75 0SB (521-0097)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection of Fivemiletown College in October 2015¹ which concluded that the school needed to address urgently significant areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement identified in the follow-up inspection were:

- the need to update policies and personal development programmes related to the care and safeguarding of young people;
- the strategic leadership of the school at the highest level, including clearer and more effective lines of communication;
- more effective evaluation by the senior leaders of the impact of the work done to effect improvement;
- to raise the standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations and in particular to address the declining standards attained by boys and those pupils entitled to free school meals;
- more effective use of the available data to inform the school's development planning and target-setting; and
- to bring coherence to the school development planning, departmental development planning and the associated action planning processes.

The school's action plans were of a good quality and identified key actions to promote improvement. The school reports that they received significant support and training in a range of areas from the Education Authority (EA).

The ETI carried out an interim follow-up visit in October 2016 and a second follow-up inspection in October 2017.

In the interval since the first follow-up inspection, the following actions or changes which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- a new principal designate was appointed in December 2015 and took up the permanent post of principal in June 2017;
- the senior management tier of the school has been restructured with revised roles and responsibilities, and staff taking on new duties;
- a pupil mentoring programme has been introduced to meet the needs of those pupils identified as being at risk of underachievement;
- effective links have been established with local feeder primary along with a shared education partnership with another post-primary school; and
- the school's budget deficit has been reduced significantly.

¹ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/follow-inspection-fivemiletown-college-county-tyrone>

Views of parents and staff

Four percent of parents (12) and 76% of staff (54) responded to the online questionnaire. Nearly all of the parental responses expressed high levels of satisfaction with their child's experiences in the school and how it was led and managed. The responses from the staff questionnaires were largely positive and highlighted pride in being part of the school community. The small number of issues raised in the questionnaire returns were discussed with the principal and the chair of the board of governors.

Key Findings

Outcomes for learners are now good; they have improved significantly since the follow-up inspection, particularly at key stage (KS) 4. The percentage of pupils attaining any five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C is sustaining an upward trend and sits now at 87%; this is well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent including English and mathematics is 62%, which is now also above the NI average for similar schools.

Importantly, the school has made headway in narrowing the gap between the achievement of boys and girls, although this needs to remain a priority and be kept under review. This good work needs to be built upon to sustain the improved outcomes attained by the pupils in public examinations, but also to develop further their wider skills, in particularly their oracy.

Over the past three years, the outcomes attained by the pupils at GCE A level or equivalent have declined, although they remain in line with the outcomes attained by pupils in similar schools.

Overall, while the quality of provision has improved it remains an important area for improvement. The school has reviewed appropriately and broadened the curriculum provision at KS 4, with a particular focus on matching courses to the pupils' interests and abilities. As a result, the pupils have access to a better choice of subjects and pathways and the opportunity to experience success. The provision at this level is enhanced through effective collaboration with the local further education college to broaden choice; this has contributed well to the improved outcomes. However, the pupils are not yet sufficiently well enough informed about the career progression pathways that are available.

The curriculum at post-16 is too narrow and constrained significantly by the small number of pupils and the limited collaboration at this level. The school needs to continue to review the viability of the curriculum at post-16. A post-16 enrichment programme has been developed; it is matched well to the pupils' interests and needs and is valued by them.

The care and support of the pupils has improved and is impacting positively on the pupils' learning experiences. The recently-appointed pastoral leader has reviewed and improved the school's approaches to child-protection, safeguarding, mental health and personal development. There is a distinctly better sense of safety and order around the school. The pupil voice, including an enhanced role for the student council, has evolved well; consequently, the pupils are more involved in discussions about decisions on school life that directly affect them, including curriculum development.

It is appropriate that the school is reviewing the content of the curriculum for the personal development of the pupils. This needs to include opportunities for the pupils to improve their confidence and to address wider contemporary issues more effectively, in particular at key KS 3, as the school implements its relationships and sexuality education policy.

The quality of the learning and teaching was good or better in promoting the pupils' learning in most (81%) of the lessons observed. Improvements were noted in the active learning strategies used by the teachers to better engage the pupils in their learning. Going forward, it will be important to ensure that all of the pupils are more challenged, for example, through effective questioning and better planned opportunities for them to develop and apply their oracy skills across the curriculum.

At KS 4, the school has made good progress in tracking systematically, and to good effect, the progress of the pupils. A good range of coherent interventions are available for those pupils identified at risk of underachieving. Consequently, the outcomes attained by the pupils at this level have improved notably. Appropriately, work has begun to extend this approach to post-16. At KS 3, the school has begun to baseline and track the progress pupils are making; there is scope for the available data to be used more robustly, to support planning for learning to ensure the pupils progress to their potential.

There have been important changes to the leadership of the school, which had been at a low base at the time of the last follow-up inspection. A cohesive and energised senior leadership team is now in place which has dealt well with many of the challenges faced, and has been strategic in taking difficult decisions to effect improvement. It has also been effective in developing a collegial approach, with staff working well together to bring about the necessary improvement. This provides a very good foundation from which to address the remaining areas for improvement identified.

Pupils, parents, staff and governors have contributed to school development planning through a consultative process. While key priorities are identified and there are regular opportunities for staff to evaluate the school's progress in effecting improvement, this process is not yet sufficiently robust. It will be important for senior leaders, including governors, to support and enable all teachers and middle managers to evaluate more rigorously the action planning for improvement in their respective areas of responsibility.

The continuing professional development of the staff is a priority. Consequently, teacher professional learning and expertise has been enhanced through initiatives such as the trusted colleague network, involving staff in peer lesson observations and sharing best practice. The staff have also benefited from good professional development in a range of appropriate areas, which align well with the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. The outcomes of this work are particularly evident in the improved outcomes attained by the pupils at KS 4.

Conclusion

Fivemiletown College needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The follow-up inspection has identified the following areas for improvement:

- to develop further the action planning process, especially at middle leadership level, to effect improvement;

- to ensure pupils are better informed around career progression pathways and to further broaden the curriculum offer, particularly at post-16; and
- to further improve the learning and teaching, including more effective questioning and increased opportunities for the pupils to develop their personal confidence and oracy skills.

It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school's provision and budget for the school's sixth form provision in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

Further action will be considered by the Department of Education.

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