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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

Fivemiletown College

January 2007

SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION OF FIVEMILETOWN COLLEGE, CO TYRONE, BT75 0SB (521-0097)

Fivemiletown College has been in the School Support Programme (SSP) for almost five years. During this period, the school has received just under £400,000 of additional funding.

In January 2006, the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) visited the school to monitor progress following a focused inspection carried out in October 2001. At the time of the January 2006 follow-up inspection, the most important improvements identified were:

- the hard work, commitment and enthusiasm of the members of the various SSP working groups;
- the improved action planning to support the school's work in SSP;
- the programme of staff development for special educational needs; and
- the collection of relevant school policies into a comprehensive staff handbook.

The inspection also highlighted that the necessary work to effect improvement was moving at too slow a pace to address adequately the key areas for improvement identified in the original baseline inspection in October 2001, and the subsequent follow-up inspections. In January 2006, the Inspectorate identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- for better strategic direction, and effective monitoring of progress by the Board of Governors (BoG);
- for the school's progress in the SSP to be a standing agenda item in meetings of the senior management team and the BoG;
- to address the key weaknesses in the quality and effectiveness of the leadership;
- to review the use and impact of the SSP funding allocation, in order to address more directly the issues raised in the original and subsequent follow-up inspections;
- to establish a process for school development planning which is underpinned by effective consultation with staff, parents, pupils and governors, in line with the guidance provided by the Department of Education;
- to address the decline in the pupils' performance in public examinations; and
- to improve the standards of cleanliness and maintenance of the existing school building and re-instigate a culture of respect among the pupils for their school environment.

In the interval since the inspection, the following changes, which affect the work of the school, have taken place:

- the appointment of a new Principal, who took up post in September 2006;
- the appointment of a new Vice-principal, who took up post in November 2006;
- the completion of a further three phases of the new building programme;
- the re-constitution of the BoG;
- several key members of staff are absent due to long-term illness; and
- the number of pupils transferring to the school declined to 57.

A team from the Inspectorate carried out a two-day follow-up inspection, which commenced on 19 January 2007. The following are the most important improvements which have taken place since the previous SSP follow-up inspection visit in 2006:

- the improved school ethos;
- the renewed commitment of the BoG, including regular meetings which are well-documented;
- the hard work and commitment of the staff as they moved and settled quickly into the new buildings;
- the improved performance of the pupils in the General Certificate in Secondary Education examinations in 2006; and
- the clear strategy to increase pupil enrolments.

During the inspection visit, the Inspectorate noted the sound quality of most of the teaching observed, which on a few occasions was excellent. Most of the staff continue to work hard and are committed to effecting improvement.

The final phase of the new building programme is nearing completion and the high quality accommodation and resources, along with the significant staff changes at senior management level, are having a noticeable beneficial impact on staff and pupils' morale. The school is emerging from a period of challenging circumstances, and particularly rapid change.

The evidence from this inspection shows that the school is now starting the work that is necessary to address the key areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection, in January 2006. It is important that the school takes forward further these essential areas for improvement. The findings from this inspection show that much remains to be done to effect all of the improvements necessary to raise standards.

As the school begins to implement the current action plans, it will be particularly important that targets for improvement are specified in ways that identify the evidence necessary for monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes.

It will be important that the school accesses well-focused support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service officers from the Southern Education and Library Board in moving forward on the issues identified in this report.

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

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