

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College,
Bangor, County Down

Controlled, co-educational, 11-18, non-selective secondary school
DE Ref No. 421-0296

Report of a Follow-up Inspection (Involving Action
Short of Strike) in March 2023



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Department of Education
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Second follow-up inspection of Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College, Bangor, County Down, BT20 4TB (421-0296)

Introduction

The original inspection of Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College was carried out in [September 2016](#) when the school's education provision was evaluated as having important areas for improvement.

A follow-up inspection, which was impacted by industrial action short of strike, took place in [April 2018](#). Owing to the action short of strike, ETI was unable to evaluate the extent to which the important areas for improvement left at the last inspection had been addressed, namely to:

- address the variation in the standards attained by the pupils;
- raise the standards in English, and the overall provision in mathematics and technology and design; and
- disseminate the most effective practice in learning and teaching in order to provide the pupils with learning experiences across the curriculum which are matched more closely to their needs, abilities and aspirations.

Consequently, Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College remained in the follow-up process.

Following the periods of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Monitoring Visit in November 2021 to help the school reflect on its provision, with a view to being well prepared for the second follow-up inspection.

A second follow-up inspection was carried out in March 2023 which was also impacted by action short of strike. Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that, due to industrial action short of strike by the teaching unions, members of the senior leadership team, the co-ordinators for key areas of the school's pastoral provision and representation from the board of governors would be engaging with the inspection in relation to the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. In addition, inspectors attended an assembly and spoke with pupils in year 8 and sixth form.

As a result of the industrial action the school was unable to provide a complete inspection evidence base to demonstrate the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. The ETI has a [statutory](#) duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education being provided for pupils and young people. The follow-up inspection proceeded on a partial basis and the key findings are based on evidence made available at the time of the inspection visit.

Key actions and changes

In the interim period since the first follow-up inspection, the following key actions have been implemented by the school.

- The school's development plan and actions plans were adjusted appropriately in light of the inspection findings.
- The re-structured senior leadership team has integrated the strategic leadership of the curricular and pastoral provision to focus on meeting the needs and aspirations of the pupils more effectively.
- A pastoral co-ordinator has been appointed to support greater consistency in the liaison with multi-agencies in safeguarding the pupils, meeting their needs and promoting their well-being.
- The curriculum at post-16 has been extended to meet better the interests, abilities and career aspirations of the pupils, including the introduction of a range of accredited enrichment courses.
- At key stage 4, all pupils now study GCSE English language and mathematics, and pupils can study double award or single award science, or Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) or Open College Network (OCN) Level 2 in applied science.
- The board of governors was expanded in 2018 to 15 members, including appointments of a new chairperson and governors with designated responsibility for staff well-being and shared education.

In the interval since the original inspection, the school received external support provided by the Education Authority (EA) in relation to:

- staff professional learning in effective learning and teaching, special educational needs, behaviour support and provisions and the use of data;
- safeguarding arrangements, anti-bullying approaches, restorative solutions, trauma-informed practice and well-being strategies; and
- the strategic leadership of middle managers.

Views of pupils, parents/carers and staff

As a result of the industrial action short of strike, the online questionnaires were not distributed to the pupils, parents/carers and staff. Therefore, it is not possible to report on the views of the pupils, parents/carers and staff. The ETI will re-issue the questionnaires at the time of the next inspection visit to complete this follow-up inspection.

Key findings

Inspectors were unable to evaluate the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. The following findings are based on the evidence available at the time of the follow-up inspection as set out above.

- To support the changing needs of the pupils, the senior leaders have prioritised the review of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, including its preventative curriculum provision. This work has included: the inclusion of restorative practice strategies in the positive behaviour policy; a review of the taught curriculum to support steady progression in the pupils' knowledge and skills required to help pupils make informed decisions about issues that may affect their safety and well-being, and to prepare them better for life and work.
- The provision for pupils who require additional support with their learning has been reviewed, resulting in changes to the transition process into year 8, including the establishment of a professional learning programme for classroom assistants.
- The pupils from year 8 and sixth form who met with inspectors spoke confidently and enthusiastically about the welcoming, diverse and inclusive ethos of the school. They appreciate their approachable and supportive teachers, and the developments in the preventative curriculum, including the access to a range of information and perspectives on topics of interest to them. Through a wide range of sporting, musical, cultural and volunteering programmes, the pupils value developing their wider skills and their sense of belonging to the school community.
- Due to the partial nature of the evidence base, the ETI is unable to evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. The pupils who met with the inspectors report that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. They spoke at length about the opportunities provided for them to develop their skills in organisation, managing conflict through restorative practice and ways to regulate their emotions, including dealing with loss.
- The role of the school nurse is a key strength in supporting the safeguarding arrangements throughout the school through access to counselling, bereavement support and therapies to promote well-being.

Conclusion

The school's second follow-up inspection is incomplete due to the action short of strike of the teaching unions. The ETI has not been able to evaluate the school's progress in effecting the required improvements in the quality of its education provision for a period of over six years. The district inspector will continue to monitor the school's progress and the follow-up inspection will be completed at the request of the school, up to and including June 2023. Subsequently, the inspection will be completed without further notice.

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