

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

Coleraine Grammar School, County Londonderry

Voluntary grammar 11-18 school, DE Ref No 342-0317

Report of a Follow-up Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in November 2022



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Department of Education
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Second follow-up to the inspection of Coleraine Grammar School, Coleraine, BT51 3LA (342-0317)

Introduction

The original inspection of Coleraine Grammar School was carried out in November 2016¹ when the quality of the school's education provision was evaluated as having important areas for improvement.

The first follow-up inspection which was impacted by action short of strike, took place in September 2018². The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) was unable to evaluate the extent to which the important areas for improvement had been addressed, through:

- improving the consistency in the quality of all aspects of learning and teaching;
- improving the out-workings of monitoring and evaluation, including the action planning and use of data, so that it impacts positively on pupil experiences and outcomes; and
- improving the quality of communication across the school.

Consequently, Coleraine Grammar School remained in the follow-up process.

The ETI carried out a monitoring visit in November 2021.

The second follow-up inspection, carried out in November 2022 was also impacted by action short of strike³. Teachers in senior leadership positions and a small number of the other teaching staff co-operated with the follow-up inspection process. As a result, the school was unable to provide a complete inspection evidence base to demonstrate the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the original inspection report. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education being provided for children and young people⁴. Therefore, the follow-up inspection proceeded on a partial basis and the key findings in this report are based on the evidence made available at the time of the inspection visit.

¹ [Post-Primary Inspection – Coleraine Grammar School, County Londonderry](#)

² [Report of a Follow-Up Inspection in September 2018](#)

³ At the time of the follow-up inspection, some of the teachers were mandated by their union to participate in legitimate industrial action short of strike, which includes not engaging with ETI inspections.

⁴ [Article 102 of the Education and Libraries \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1986.](#)

Key actions and changes

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

- leadership skills, such as action planning and the effective use of data for middle leaders; and
- professional development to support effective learning and teaching to meet better the needs of individual pupils.

The following are the key actions or changes which affect the work of the school.

- The school's action plans to address the areas for improvement are informed soundly by a good range of quantitative and qualitative data and the senior leadership team regularly adjusts these plans, to address the evolving challenges.
- The school enrolment has decreased from 1154 to 1057, in line with the area-based plan for the re-organisation of the legacy schools (Coleraine Academical Institution and Coleraine High School).
- The number of teachers, as measured by full time equivalents (FTE), has reduced from 74.2 FTE to 64.9 FTE in line with the re-organisation plan.
- An additional senior teacher has been appointed with responsibility for special educational needs.
- A number of new appointments have been made at middle management level.
- The school has implemented a communications strategy.
- There is an annual review of the post-14 curriculum.
- A new chair to the board of governors took up post in 2019.
- Under the leadership of both the new chair and his predecessor, the Governors' sub-groups with oversight of learning and teaching, and staff wellbeing continue to operate and involve themselves in these aspects of school improvement work.

Views of parents/carers and staff

As a result of the industrial action short of strike, the online questionnaires were not distributed to the parents/carers and staff. Therefore, it is not possible to report on the views of the parents/carers and staff. The ETI intends to 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 quality of the outcomes for learners, provision for learning, and the effectiveness of leadership and management. The following findings are based on the evidence available at the time of the follow-up inspection.

- The Inspectors met with two groups of pupils, who were representative of all of the year groups. The pupils were very positive about their school experiences and valued the efforts their teachers make to support them in their learning. They expressed appreciation for the wide range of extra-curricular activities and praised their teachers for being approachable, kind and respectful. They reported that they felt safe and happy in school.
- The senior leadership team has worked assiduously in addressing the areas for improvement, in order to improve the quality of provision and the outcomes that the pupils attain.
- Continued investment and support of teacher professional learning is being used to improve the consistency of learning and teaching across the school. Development of learning and teaching is well led and offers a range of appropriate opportunities for staff to build their capacity and expertise. A positive culture for professional development is being promoted and the school has identified, and is working hard to improve, aspects of learning and teaching, including: differentiation, feedback and active learning. The leadership team maintains internal records of this work that allows them to see the progress being made. Inspectors can only affirm all of the hard work that is put into promoting improvements in learning and teaching through observation of a wider range of lessons at the time of the next inspection visit, which provide the evidence that the required improvements have been effected in practice.
- The senior leadership team has put in place robust systems for monitoring and tracking pupil progress. This has enabled them to identify where additional pupil support is needed and implement appropriate interventions. A range of effective arrangements and processes are in place to allow senior leaders to monitor and evaluate the impact of the action plans and the work of the subject departments. The senior leaders are secure in their understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have worked effectively within the context of the challenges and constraints in recent years.
- Notable support has been provided for middle leaders to increase their capacity in action planning and in making effective use of data. Inspectors were unable to see and evaluate the impact of this work.
- The school maintains, reviews and evaluates an extensive record of performance and pastoral information and has started using this data well to create individualised pupil profiles. The profile gathers together pastoral and academic information, so that teachers can see a pupil's individual strengths, needs and learning preferences. It will be important in implementing this work further that the school will be able to demonstrate that the information is used consistently and effectively to plan for individualised learning and meeting pupil needs.

- A wide range of survey work with pupils, parents and staff has improved the quality of communication with stakeholders; communication has been improved through more frequent contact and consultation across a range of methods, including social media. The school retains good data on the effectiveness of its communication methods and much of the information that the school receives from stakeholders informs its provision. The school leadership team has monitored and evaluated effectively the impact of its parental and staff communiqués and the data reflects positively on the improvements being taken forward.
- The school has worked hard to address issues and concerns raised by staff. The school has benefitted from joining the NI schools' wellbeing group in 2017, which has allowed it to use a formal structure for setting staff wellbeing targets and measuring the impact of actions taken through the use of benchmarks. The school's internal data shows good progress in its identified welfare targets since 2017. The senior leadership team and the board of governors have indicated they will continue to support and prioritise staff wellbeing.
- There is ongoing work in reviewing annually the curriculum so that the pupils' interests, abilities and aspirations are considered and addressed appropriately.
- The governors remain proactive, knowledgeable and dedicated; they are very well-informed about the life and work of the school.
- In the very small number of lessons observed, the pupils settled quickly and were keen to learn. There were positive working relationships and a range of effective teaching strategies was used to develop the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Due to the action short of strike, a wider range of lessons could not be observed during this inspection visit.

Conclusion

The school's second follow-up inspection is incomplete due to the industrial action short of strike,

Given the evidenced progress made in areas of communication and in monitoring and evaluation processes, the remaining area for improvement is now to:

- demonstrate improvements in the consistency in the quality of learning and teaching, and in the quality of middle leadership.

The ETI has been unable to evaluate the school's progress in effecting the required improvements in the quality of its education provision for a period of 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 April 2023. Subsequently, the inspection will be completed without further notice.

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