

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

Movilla High School, Newtownards, County Down

Controlled, co-educational, non-selective 11-16, DE Ref No (421-0012)

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2022



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Department of Education
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Follow-up to the inspection of Movilla High School, Newtownards, BT23 7HA (421-0012)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a second follow-up inspection in May 2018¹. Owing to action short of strike by the teaching unions, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact of actions taken and the extent to which the significant areas for improvement had been addressed, namely to:

- to raise the standards achieved by pupils in public examinations, and in their acquisition and application of wider skills and dispositions;
- to improve the quality of the learning and teaching;
- to improve further the arrangements for the pastoral care and support of the pupils, in particular by implementing more effective strategies to engage the pupils in their learning; and
- for the senior leaders to evaluate more rigorously the impact of the work done to effect improvement.

Consequently, there remained a need for Movilla High School to address urgently the significant areas for improvement. The Department of Education made the decision that the school remained within the Formal Intervention Process under the Every School a Good School policy.

The school's development plan and action plans were adjusted appropriately in light of the inspection findings.

The ETI carried out a monitoring visit in June 2021 and a third follow-up inspection in May 2022.

In the interval since the initial inspection, the school has received external support provided by the Education Authority in relation to: strategic leadership and management; learning and teaching, the Autism Support Centres (ASC); pastoral care and positive behaviour management. The extent of the external support included: building the strategic capacity of senior and middle leadership; enabling staff to ensure data is used holistically to set realistic targets in line with pupil potential and capability; and improved behaviour.

Over the same period, the key actions or changes which affect the work of the school include:

- The overall school enrolment has increased from 215 in 2015 to 402 pupils currently. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils with a statement of educational need has decreased from 41% to 32%.

¹ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/asos-follow-up-inspection-movilla-high-school-newtownards-county-down-421-0012.pdf>

- The school budget continues to be managed within its three-year financial plan.
- The Education Authority (EA) set up an ASC in September 2020 for year 8 and added a year 9 ASC in September 2021.
- There have been new appointments of department heads for careers, mathematics, English, special educational needs, religious education, home economics, art, geography and science; and approximately two-thirds of the staff are new to the school.
- The senior leadership team has been restructured: the former acting principal has taken up the permanent position of school principal, a permanent vice-principal has been appointed and senior leadership posts have been confirmed, including their roles and responsibilities.

As a consequence of the external support and the key changes and actions taken within the school, there have been improvements in the quality of education as reported in the key findings below.

Key findings

Seventeen percent of parents (30) responded to the online questionnaire²; fifty-seven percent (17) of them provided additional written comments. Most of the parents are happy with their child's pastoral and learning experiences at the school and they commented on the highly committed staff. Sixty-eight percent of the staff (21) responded to the questionnaire. Overall, their very positive feedback highlighted the inclusive, welcoming and supportive ethos, the sustained school improvement work and the commitment of the staff to the pupils' well-being. Any issues raised in the parent and staff questionnaires were discussed with the senior leaders and governors.

The outcomes for learners have improved and the remaining important areas for improvement identified are being addressed.

The school is able to demonstrate the positive impact of intervention and support strategies in improving outcomes for pupils. In the lessons observed, most of the pupils responded readily to their teachers and peers and engaged actively in the lessons through discussion and independent work; most pupils interact well with their peers so that paired or group tasks are productive and they take pride in their work. When given the opportunity they think critically, make informed decisions and manage information for different purposes. The pupils with additional learning needs progress appropriately in line with their targets. In going forward, improving outcomes further, particularly in English and mathematics, is an important area for improvement, including attendance.

² As part of the follow-up inspection, there was an opportunity for parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire

The pupils who met with the inspectors spoke about their helpful, friendly teachers and the strategies they use in class to progress their learning, including the assessment and tracking cycle. They appreciate how the school's positive behaviour approaches increase their motivation to learn and enable them to regulate their behaviour. They are self-confident, self-aware and show determination in taking responsibility for their progress. In benefiting from a range of sporting, creative and enrichment clubs, they appreciate their wider learning opportunities. They reported that they feel safe and cared for in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

The quality of provision has improved and the remaining important areas for improvement identified are being addressed.

The quality of learning and teaching, pastoral care and support for the pupils has improved. Almost all of the lessons observed were effective in promoting successful learning. In the best practice, the pupils are attentive, ready to learn and attain well. The stimulating lessons engage the pupils through a range of structured learning strategies to develop their knowledge, wider skills and dispositions. Furthermore, staff use effective questioning to extend the pupils' thinking and provide well-considered practical help to those pupils who require additional support with their learning.

The provision for English remains an important area for improvement, especially in the outcomes attained by the pupils. A significant development within the department is the quality of learning and teaching. All of the lessons observed were effective, characterised by: high expectations of the pupils' behaviour, engagement and work; positive, supportive working relationships; and well-planned learning activities.

The provision for mathematics remains a significant area for improvement. While there is improvement in the quality of planning for learning, there continues to be a need for greater consistency in the quality of the pupils' learning experiences: a majority of lessons observed were not effective in progressing the learning including insufficient opportunities to engage the pupils actively in their learning.

The recently established ASCs are meeting the needs of the pupils very effectively. The staff have developed very good working relationships amongst each other and with the pupils. The needs of the pupils are central to the organisation and delivery of the curriculum: the pupils respond by engaging in their work tasks with interest and enthusiasm. The pupils are developing friendships and empathy with their peers, developing coping strategies to manage any fears and anxieties they may have. The school has established an effective model for the ASCs to provide an appropriate curriculum, along with extensive social experiences using specialist and mainstream class teachers.

The school has appropriately identified that the breadth and balance of the curriculum provision as an important area for improvement and has planned to extend the range of GCSE subjects in line with pupil ability and career aspirations, in order to facilitate appropriate progression to the next stage of their education. Furthermore, the school has begun the work on reducing the number of GCSE equivalents with a view to enable learners to gain qualifications more appropriate to their progression pathways.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership and management have improved; leadership teams, at all levels, are addressing the remaining important areas for improvement.

The restructured senior leadership team (SLT), with distributed roles and responsibilities, and the new appointments at middle leadership level have resulted in positive collegial working relationships and an increased drive for school improvement. This has led to notable improvements in the pastoral care and support of the pupils and, in the quality of learning and teaching to engage the pupils better in their learning. In going forward, it will be important to embed more robust quality assurance processes at all levels, notably observations of the learning and monitoring of the pupils' work, to develop further the quality of planning, teaching, learning and assessment to meet better the changing needs of the pupils and improve the outcomes they attain.

Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors carry out their roles conscientiously; they are actively involved with the life and the work of the school; and importantly they promote strong links with the community. The governors are informed well about the school's progress through regular meetings with the SLT, where they quality assure the provision and exercise their challenge function.

Overall effectiveness

Movilla High School needs to continue to address the remaining important areas for improvement. The follow-up inspection has identified the need to:

- continue to improve the outcomes for the pupils in English and the provision in mathematics;
- ensure breadth and balance in the curriculum to meet better the changing needs, abilities and aspirations of the pupils; and
- embed more robust quality assurance processes, notably observations of the learning and monitoring of the pupils' work.

The ETI will conduct a further follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

Appendix A: Accommodation

The accommodation for technology and design requires attention to enhance the provision for the pupils.

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