



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Movilla High School
Newtownards**

November 2015

FOLLOW-UP TO THE POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION OF MOVILLA HIGH SCHOOL, NEWTOWNARDS (421-0012)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection¹ of Movilla High School in January 2014, when the quality of education was evaluated as inadequate².

The main areas for improvement were the need to:

- raise the pupils' attainment in public examinations;
- ensure that the pastoral provision supports the pupils in their learning and skills development in order to improve the standards they achieve; and
- agree and implement procedures to measure the impact and effectiveness of learning and teaching strategies on pupils' experiences and outcomes.

The school's action plans took appropriate account of the areas for improvement and were of a good quality. The school reports that it has received significant support from a range of Education Authority staff.

The ETI carried out two interim follow-up visits during 2014 -15, with a follow-up inspection in November 2015.

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

- in July 2015, the leadership of the school changed; the vice-principal of the school was appointed to acting principal;
- the school's enrolment has decreased from 353 pupils at the time of the original inspection to 215;
- the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals has increased from 38% at the time of the original inspection to 53% this year; and
- the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs has increased from 38% to 41%.

Key Findings

- In the period between the original inspection and the end of the last academic year, the school has been adversely affected by a lack of strategic leadership, strained relationships at various levels and several long-term illnesses in key curriculum areas. This situation was compounded by a deteriorating system for the pastoral care and behaviour management of the pupils, as evidenced by the 440 recorded suspension incidents during 2014-15.

¹ See standard inspection report at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/inspection-reports/inspection-reports-post-primary/inspection-reports-post-primary-2014/post-primary-inspection-movilla-high-school-newtownards-co-down.pdf>

² From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as inadequate will now be reported as requiring to address urgently the significant areas for improvement.

- Over the first three months of this academic year, the senior leadership team and the staff have worked collegially to put in place measures to promote positive behaviour by the pupils. The monitoring data indicates that the measures put in place, underpinned by a more consistent approach by staff, have been more effective.
- Relationships between staff at all levels have improved. The governors are better informed about the academic and financial performance of the school and have begun to monitor and evaluate more strategically the progress against the planned actions for school improvement.
- The standards attained by the pupils in English remain a significant area for improvement. While there are examples of higher-quality writing in a minority of the pupils' books, the overall standard of their written work across the year groups remains a significant area for improvement. The pupils' oral confidence and ability to apply analytical skills are too limited. Since the original inspection, the percentage of pupils attaining at GCSE grades A* to C in English has not improved and is still more than 30 percentage points below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools.
- The provision for mathematics is a significant area for improvement. In the less effective learning and teaching, in one-half of the lessons observed, there were insufficient opportunities to engage the pupils in order to extend and consolidate their learning and so improve the standards they attain. Since the original inspection, the standards attained by the pupils at GCSE grades A* to C in mathematics have declined and are now 26 percentage points below the NI average for similar schools.
- The school has begun to identify and address the significant variations in the quality of learning and teaching, although much more remains to be done. Appropriate development is being provided for staff and good support materials have been developed. A good start has been made by middle leaders in the process of monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the learning and teaching, and senior leaders have begun recently to underpin this process through classroom observations and feedback.
- While one-half of the lessons observed during the follow-up inspection were good or better, it is a concern that the remainder had important or significant areas for improvement. The learning in a few of the less effective lessons was disrupted by low-level misbehaviour by a small number of pupils, which needs to be managed to better effect. The evidence is clear that a minority of the pupils are disengaging with the learning process.
- The standards attained by the pupils in public examinations have further declined since the original inspection and the trends represent a very significant concern. The school is performing well below the NI average for similar non-selective schools. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE examinations or equivalents at grades A* to C has declined from 23.6% at the time of the original inspection to just 18.4%. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE examinations or equivalents at grades A* to E has also declined, from 72.2% to just 51.3%.

- There has also been a decline in the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, from 15.2% to 13.2%; this is unacceptably low. The school is performing well below the NI average for similar non-selective schools.
- The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals who achieve five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is also unacceptably low at just 4%.
- The attendance of the pupils has remained below the NI average for a number of years, particularly in the senior school. The pupils' attendance requires significant improvement and is a contributory factor in their low achievement.
- The provision for the care and support of the pupils requires further development to continue to create a more positive climate for learning and to ensure the behaviour management strategies are firmly embedded into classroom practice.

Overall Effectiveness

The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interests of all the learners. The areas for improvement include the need:

- to raise the standards achieved by the 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.

Further action will be considered by the Department of Education.

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