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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**St Joseph's College
and St Vincent's Centre**

September 2007

FOLLOW UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE, BELFAST AND ST VINCENT'S CENTRE, BELFAST, BT6 0BY (123-0275)

At the time of the standard inspection in November 2005, the school had specialist provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) at St Vincent's Centre and Glenmona Residential Care Centre. Since the inspection, Glenmona Residential Care Centre has been placed with another school. The follow-up inspection in September 2007 did not include Glenmona Residential Care Centre.

The standard inspection highlighted strengths in the quality of the pastoral provision throughout the school, the quality of leadership provided by the Principal, the commitment of the Vice-principals and senior teachers, the overall quality of teaching and the willingness of staff to take on extra responsibilities, the positive start made to the process of self-evaluation and the standards achieved by many of the pupils.

The inspection identified areas for improvement including:

- the need to enhance further the provision for sixth form pupils, for example, to include a wider variety of vocational courses;
- the need to ensure the quality of teaching is more consistent by disseminating the very good practice observed during the inspection; and
- the need to consolidate and build on the good work in improving the standards throughout the school.

In the interval since the inspection, the following action which affects the work of St Joseph's College has taken place:

- the school has secured vocational enhancement programme funding to work with the local further education colleges to deliver vocational courses at key stage (KS) 4 and sixth form;
- pupils in the sixth form have the opportunity to participate in the Step-Up To Science programme which offers Double Award Science Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education in conjunction with the University of Ulster;
- National Vocational Qualifications in early years and information technology have been introduced into the sixth form curriculum;
- an Assessment for Learning focus group has been set up and a representative from each subject department has contributed to a good practice DVD made by the school; and
- there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils for whom English is not the first language enrolled at the school.

The strengths of the specialist provision for pupils with SEN at St Vincent's Centre included the levels of satisfaction of the provision demonstrated by the parents and carers of the pupils, the hard-working staff, the engagement of most of the pupils and the overall level of achievement.

The inspection identified areas for improvement including:

- the need to plan more rigorously the teaching strategies and approaches for behaviour management which take better account of the complex needs of the pupils; and
- the need to address, as a matter of urgency, the strategic management issues which are exacerbated by the distance between the school and the unit.

In the interval since the inspection, the following action which affects the work of St Vincent's Centre has taken place:

- the teachers have attended in-service training on teaching strategies and approaches to behavioural management supported by the Belfast Education and Library Board; and
- a number of policies, including the policy for the promotion of good behaviour and the code of conduct for staff and pupils have been reviewed.

The school has made a positive response to the inspection findings and has drawn up an appropriate action plan to address the principal issues identified in the report. The District Inspector carried out monitoring visits on 7 June 2006 and 4 April 2007. The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out the follow-up inspection on 27 September 2007.

The following are the most important improvements in St Joseph's College since the standard inspection:

- the commitment to developing purposeful links with other educational institutions, including further and higher education colleges, to enhance the curriculum provided for the pupils in KS4 and at post-16 level and to include a wider variety of vocational courses;
- the developing culture of reflection and self-evaluation as evidenced by the innovative and effective means of identifying and disseminating good practice; and
- the good use made of performance and other data by management at all levels to inform learning and teaching and the continuing strong focus on raising standards.

The following are the most important improvements in St Vincent's Centre since the standard inspection:

- the strategies put in place to raise attendance and to promote positive behaviour among the pupils, which have led to greater engagement of the pupils in lessons;
- the emerging consistency in the quality of the planning for learning and teaching;
- the increased opportunities for the pupils to participate in practical and vocational courses provided by the local further education colleges and to engage in community projects; and
- the increased access for the pupils to external accreditation;

Good progress has been made in the areas for improvement identified during the original inspection. The educational and pastoral needs of the learners are well met. The parents and broader community can have confidence in the school's commitment to and action for improvement, and the effectiveness of its response to the findings of the standard inspection.

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