

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Providing Inspection Services for
**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**St Mary's College
Derry**

February 2008

FOLLOW-UP TO THE BASELINE INSPECTION VISIT FOR SPECIALIST SCHOOL STATUS AND TO THE SCHOOL'S FIRST YEAR REPORT ON THE SPECIALIST SCHOOL PROGRAMME ST MARY'S COLLEGE, DERRY, BT48 9QE (223-0081)

As you are aware, the school was selected to take part in the Specialist Schools' pilot project commencing in September 2006, the school selected science as its specialism and a baseline inspection visit took place in October 2006.

The baseline inspection visit indicated the strengths of the programme which included:

- the strong ethos in the science department which has helped promote the subject and the good levels of achievement; and
- the vision of the Principal and the rigorous work which has gone into the preparatory stage of the programme.

The baseline inspection visited recommended that, for the purpose of showing improvement more clearly, the school needed to show how:

- the strengths of the work in science can be used to bring demonstrable improvement across the school;
- the work will be monitored and evaluated; and
- new resources, acquired through the initiative, can be linked directly to improvement.

In September 2007, the school submitted a report to the Department of Education (DE) in which it indicated that some of the year one targets which the school had set itself had been achieved, good progress was being made on others, and yet others had not been achieved.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out a formal follow-up inspection on the 4 and 5 February 2008 which identified the following improvements.

- The specialist programme is an integral part of the school development planning process and the school's development plans (2006 and 2007) have been adjusted in light of the baseline inspection findings.
- Effective procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the extent to which the initiatives are improving standards, especially in the areas for improvement identified in the baseline inspection visit.
- Science continues to be a particular strength within the school, extending the pupils' experiences through, for example,
 - scientific competitions;
 - visits to places of scientific interest;
 - links with the primary sectors;
 - developing the teachers' awareness of the pupils' learning skills;
 - promoting active learning opportunities;
 - good use made of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning in all classrooms; and
 - introducing more appropriate courses which are matched better to the needs of the pupils.

- The quality of teaching observed which was always good or better.
- The determined approach to developing links with the local community in relation to promoting knowledge and understanding of career opportunities in the field of science.
- The resources are being used effectively to bring about improvement.
- There is evidence to show that the science department is involved in promoting and disseminating a range of teaching approaches to help bring about improvement, for example, by using a more focused approach to group work and to active and co-operative learning.

For the purposes of showing improvement more clearly the school needs to:

- set targets for General Certificate of Secondary Education which are more realistic and appropriate to the abilities and aspirations of the pupils; and
- review and adjust the school development plan in light of the findings of this follow-up inspection.

The follow-up inspection findings confirm that good progress has been made in most of the areas for improvement identified during the original baseline inspection, but some areas still require improvement.

The Inspectorate will continue to monitor the school's continued progress as part of the Specialist Schools' Programme.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2008

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the DE website: www.deni.gov.uk or may be obtained from the Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.