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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
Promoting Improvement*



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



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## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

### **Report of a Follow-up Inspection**

**St Mary's High School  
Newry**

**April 2007**

## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE AREA INSPECTION OF ST MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL, NEWRY, CO DOWN, BT34 2DT (523-0108)**

The school was inspected in January 2005 as part of the pilot area inspection in the Newry and Mourne district. The inspection highlighted the exemplary behaviour and co-operation of the pupils, the dedicated and hard working teachers, the very good overall results in external examinations, and the use of active learning strategies to engage underachieving pupils. The inspection also identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the development of teaching strategies to provide opportunities for the pupils to achieve greater independence and responsibility for their own learning;
- the need to provide a more coherent and consistent provision for the pupils, in particular, with regard to information and communication technology (ICT) and careers education and guidance; and
- the identification of a clearer strategic vision for the school to establish priorities and inform the development planning process.

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

- the introduction of an effective mentoring programme for year 11 pupils who are identified as requiring individual support;
- the significant investment and improvement in ICT and library resources, which are widely accessible to pupils;
- the establishment of the school employability team; and
- the comprehensive review of the school's self-evaluation and development planning processes.

Following the inspection, the school agreed with the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) to engage in a self-evaluative follow-up process. The school submitted a concise self-evaluative report to the Inspectorate, including clear evidence of the progress made with the issues identified in the original inspection.

The processes used to gather the evidence were effective. The Inspectorate confirms that the findings and recommendations arising from the process are accurate and appropriate, and are an effective response to the areas for improvement identified in the original report.

The Inspectorate carried out a follow-up inspection in April 2007, in order to ascertain the progress made and to affirm the evaluations provided by the school. The school has responded constructively, taken appropriate actions and is making good progress on the identified areas for improvement.

The most important improvements which have taken place since the inspection are:

- the increase in the range of teaching and learning strategies, in particular, the pupils' use of ICT, which promotes their capacity to develop as independent learners;
- the improved breadth of curriculum and accredited qualifications available to pupils in collaboration with the local college of further education;
- the improved provision of careers education and guidance initiated by the employability team, and the introduction of clearly articulated pathways for pupil progression;
- the introduction of a robust system of school development planning which is well informed by self-evaluation; and
- the development and communication of a clear strategic vision which underpins the school's self-evaluation and development planning processes.

The school has made good progress in addressing the key areas for action. The parents and broader community can have confidence in the school's commitment to improvement and the effectiveness of its self-evaluation process in response to the findings of the inspection.

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