

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

## Wellington College, Belfast

Co-educational controlled selective 11-18 school

DE Ref No (141-0270)

### Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2022



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## Follow-up to the inspection of Wellington College, Belfast, BT7 3HE (141-0270)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection of Wellington College, Belfast in [October 2017](#). 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:

- raise the standards achieved by the pupils, particularly the levels of attainment in public examinations;
- improve the quality of planning, teaching and assessment in order to promote more successful learning;
- improve the quality of the strategic leadership of the school at a senior level, including governance; and
- build the capacity of all staff to self-evaluate robustly all aspects of provision.

Consequently, there remained a need for Wellington College to address urgently the significant areas for improvement. The Department of Education, in 2018, made the decision that the school, under the Every School a Good School policy, remained within the Formal Intervention Process.

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 second follow-up inspection in May 2022.

In the interval since the follow-up inspection, the school has received external support from the Education Authority, in relation to the areas for improvement. The extent of the support included support to restructure and build the capacity of the senior and middle leaders.

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

- The senior leadership in the school has undergone significant restructuring and there has been a clear focus on developing the capacity of senior and middle leaders through tailored professional learning.
- Monitoring the quality of learning and teaching has been prioritised across the school.
- There are arrangements in place to monitor and track pupils' progress in learning.

- The approach to curriculum planning has been reviewed and changes have been made to the curriculum offer for the pupils, particularly at key stage 4 and post-16.
- Academic selection as the basis for admission to the school has been suspended for the current school year.

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

Just under one-fifth of parents (106) responded to the online questionnaire (as part of the second follow-up inspection, there was an opportunity for parents/carers and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire), with 54 of them providing additional written comments. Most of the parents commented positively on the work of the school, communication between home and school, and the excellent pastoral care system. Just under one-half of the staff responded to the questionnaire; their feedback was wholly positive and reflected their satisfaction with, and support for, the life and work of the school. Any issues raised in the parent and staff questionnaires were discussed with the principal and governors.

The outcomes for learners have improved and are now good.

The pupils are courteous, polite and well-disposed to learning. They contribute well to the life of the school and the wider community. Their behaviour both in and out of the classroom is exemplary.

Achieving consistency in the quality of learning and teaching has been prioritised across the school and the senior and middle leaders have carried out lesson observations.

There are now more robust internal assessment processes in place to monitor and track pupils' progress in learning. There is improved use of data, both qualitative and quantitative, to identify and inform the support for pupils at risk of underachieving. In going forward, the school has appropriately identified post-16 outcomes as an area for improvement, which it is addressing and monitoring through a more robust target setting process.

The inspectors spoke with groups of pupils from every year group across the school. In these focus groups, the pupils talked very positively about their experiences including their participation in a range of sporting activities and leadership opportunities. They reported that they feel safe and well cared for and know how to access support if they have concerns about their wellbeing. The pupils have good opportunities to voice their opinions, including for example through the School Council. Consequently, there have been tangible improvements in classroom practice and in other aspects of school life.

The quality of provision has improved and is now good.

Almost all of the lessons observed were effective in promoting successful learning. The best practice was characterised by the teachers' implementation of elements of the school's model for effective learning. This included effective questioning, active learning strategies, appropriate modelling and scaffolding of the pupils' learning, which resulted in higher levels of pupil engagement, learning and enjoyment. In the less effective practice, there was insufficient planning for differentiation and over-direction by the teacher.

The quality of the provision in mathematics is now good. There is a consistent approach to lesson planning across the department and the pupils are progressing well in their learning, including through using successful retrieval strategies and a range of assessment for learning practices.

The quality of provision for science has improved. The school is addressing the remaining important areas for improvement which include the stability in staffing, uptake at post-16 and the variation in standards.

The quality of careers education advice information and guidance is now good. There is a coherent, well-planned programme for careers across the school. The leavers' data indicate that the pupils make progress to a range of destinations that are commensurate with their ability and career aspirations. The curriculum is regularly reviewed to reflect the learners' interests, abilities and needs.

The quality and effectiveness of the leadership and management have improved and are now good.

The school has restructured the senior leadership team to clearly align their roles and responsibilities to the priorities on the school's improvement plan. The senior leaders have established effective links with middle leaders and are well-informed about the quality of provision across the school. They have identified well the school improvement priorities and are implementing appropriate actions to bring about the necessary improvements. The school has established a more robust system to monitor, track and evaluate outcomes and provision which has led to a collaborative approach to school improvement.

The middle leaders and teachers are developing their understanding of self-evaluation processes, and are now using data to set challenging targets for departments and pupils. Furthermore, the target setting is based on more rigorous analysis of a range of data.

Governors are now well informed about the life and work of the school and provide appropriate levels of challenge and support. 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.

## Overall effectiveness

Wellington College now demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement in: the use of self-evaluation processes and analysis of internal data in order to continue improvement in the pupil's learning experiences and address any variations in their outcomes.

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