

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

Larne High School and Learning Support Centre

October 2015

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF LARNE HIGH SCHOOL AND LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE, CO ANTRIM, BT40 1NT (321-0038)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection¹ of Larne High School and Learning Support Centre in October 2011, when the quality of education was evaluated as satisfactory².

A follow-up inspection³ was conducted in December 2013 and concluded that the quality of education remained satisfactory. The main areas for improvement were to:

- raise the standards the pupils attain, address the variation in individual subject performance at GCSE level and disseminate further the best practice within the school; and
- use assessment data more effectively to set targets at a whole-school, subject and individual pupil level and to use more effectively all data to inform practice.

The ETI carried out a specialist visit in November 2014, and a second follow-up inspection in October 2015.

In the interval since the first follow-up inspection, the following changes and actions which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals has increased significantly to around 39%;
- the curriculum has been revised at key stage (KS) 4 to include a wider range of vocational and applied subjects;
- a system for recording, tracking and reporting pupil assessments and progress has been implemented, with mechanisms to identify and mentor pupils at risk of underachieving; and
- the membership of the senior leadership team has broadened to develop further the capacity of key staff to lead the actions for improvement.

Key Findings

- The senior leadership team and the staff have worked collegially to address the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspections. They have, for example, adopted a strategic approach to whole-school improvement with an appropriate focus on raising the standards achieved by the pupils.
- Effective arrangements have been established to disseminate the best practice in learning and teaching, and to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision for learning.

¹ See inspection report at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/inspection-reports/inspection-reports-post-primary/inspection-reports-post-primary-2011/standard-inspection-larne-high-school-and-learning-support-centre.pdf>

² From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as satisfactory, will now be reported as having important areas for improvement.

³ See inspection report at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/inspection-reports/inspection-reports-post-primary/inspection-reports-post-primary-2013/follow-up-inspection-larne-high-school-and-learning-support-centre-co-antrim.pdf>

- The provision for mathematics is now good. As a result of effective leadership within the department, the quality of planning, learning and teaching have improved significantly.
- All pupils are now entered for five or more subjects at GCSE or equivalent level. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C has increased from 35% to 91% over the past three years, and is now well above the corresponding Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools.
- Over the same three-year period, the percentage of pupils attaining GCSE English at grades A* to C has increased by 20% and is now just above the NI average for similar schools. In mathematics, the percentage of pupils achieving at grades A* to C has increased by 17% and is now 10% above the NI average for similar schools.
- The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, has increased from 19% to 33% over the past three years. This attainment level, however, is still well below the current NI average for similar schools and remains an important area for improvement.
- 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, remains too low at 18%, which is well below the corresponding NI average.
- At post-16 level, the percentage of pupils achieving three or more GCE A level qualifications or equivalent at grade C or above has increased from 25% to 47% and is in line with the NI average for similar schools. However, the range of subjects studied by these pupils is narrow and should be reviewed; the number of courses provided at post-16 falls well short of meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework.
- The senior leaders of the school make more effective use of pupil assessment data at whole-school level to identify areas for improvement, to set realistic targets and to assess the impact of the intervention strategies introduced. The class teachers show a developing confidence in using the data to establish baselines for pupil achievements, and to track their progress. The process is characterised by the involvement of the pupils in setting their own targets in consultation with their teachers.
- The quality of learning and teaching remains good. Most of the lessons observed during the inspection were good or better. However, there is insufficient breadth and balance in the curriculum followed by the pupils at both KS 4 and post-16 level.

Overall Effectiveness

The school needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners. In line with Annex C of the Department's Every School a Good School policy, the school will be eligible for support. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

The follow-up inspection has identified the following areas for improvement:

- to raise further the standards achieved by the pupils, in particular the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics;
- to address the standards attained by those pupils entitled to free schools meals; and
- to review and improve the curriculum followed by the pupils, to ensure they have access to a broad and balanced range of subjects with appropriate opportunities for progression.

It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school's provision and budget for the school's sixth form provision in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

The ETI will carry out a further follow-up inspection in 12-18 months and a report will be published.

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