

Report of a Post-primary Inspection  
St Kevin's College, Lisnaskea

October 2024



## Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION.....	1
B. VIEWS OF PUPILS, PARENTS AND STAFF.....	1
C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION.....	2
2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS.....	2
3. MAIN REPORT .....	3
A. SETTING THE VISION.....	3
B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION .....	4
C. BUILDING EQUITY .....	6
D. EMBEDDING SUCCESS .....	6
E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING .....	7
F. CHILD PROTECTION .....	8
4. GOING FORWARD.....	8
5. APPENDICES .....	9
APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE TERMS .....	9
APPENDIX 2: HEALTH AND SAFETY .....	10

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

St Kevin's College is a co-educational, non-selective school for pupils aged 11-18, situated on the outskirts of the town of Lisnaskea. The pupils who attend the school come from the town and the surrounding areas of County Fermanagh.

The school opened in September 2017 as the result of an amalgamation between St Comhghall's College, Lisnaskea and St Eugene's College, Rosslea. Since opening, the school has been over-subscribed every year and as a result enrolment has increased by 31 per cent and stands currently at 760 pupils, well beyond the physical capacity of the current building (450 pupils). To alleviate some of the pressures associated with the accommodation the school has arrangements in place for an off-site study centre for pupils at post-16 level. The funding for a major capital expansion programme of works was announced by the Department of Education in May 2024.

Over the last four years, the proportion of pupils with free school meals entitlement has decreased slightly and is almost 30 per cent of the enrolment. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs (SEN) has remained steady at just over one-quarter (25.3%) of the pupil population, just under one-half of whom have a statement of SEN.

## **B. VIEWS OF PUPILS, PARENTS AND STAFF**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to pupils, parents and staff in advance of the inspection.

Seventeen per cent of all pupils (130) responded to the questionnaire and the responses were largely positive. Almost all pupils reported that they enjoy school to varying degrees and that they know there are adults they can talk to if they have a problem. Almost all pupils also reported that the school provides relationships and sexuality education (RSE) that they find useful. Most of the pupils reported that the school is preparing them well for the next stage of education, training or work and that the student council works constructively to improve aspects of school life. There were 15 additional written responses from the pupils which included some suggestions of how school might be even better, including through more collaboration with other schools.

Almost twelve per cent of parents (67) responded to the questionnaire, 24 of whom provided written responses. Almost all parents reported that their child is happy in school, that they know about the school's vision and aims and that the school has informed them how to report a safeguarding/child protection issue. Most parents who responded reported that their child is making good progress in their learning, that they receive helpful information about their child's progress and that they are content with the pastoral care and support given to their child in school.

Almost one-half of staff (60) responded to the questionnaire with 11 written comments provided; all of the questionnaire responses and written comments were wholly positive. All staff reported that they are clear about the school's vision, that staff wellbeing is promoted effectively in school and that their views are sought, valued and acted upon. Almost all staff reported that they have benefitted from recent professional learning opportunities, that they have the resources they need to do their job effectively and that all people are understood and respected in this school.

Any individual concerns expressed in the questionnaire responses were shared with the principal and three representatives of the board of governors.

### **C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION**

The ETI worked alongside St Kevin's College to consider how well the school:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

## **2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

- The vision and values of St Kevin's College are front and centre of the life and work of the school. The core values of respect, compassion, community, justice, dignity, prayer and commitment to excellence are referenced in, and aligned to, the planning for learning.
- The school fosters a values-driven classroom culture helping staff to connect with the pupils, developing in them real-life skills that will carry beyond the classroom and creating, for the most part, classrooms that encourage pupils to reflect on, and improve, their learning.
- The school has identified appropriately the need to better standardise subject planning; it will be important to include planning for differentiated learning and strategies for adaptive teaching to meet better the needs of all pupils in every classroom.
- Pupils overcome challenges and barriers to their learning as a result of the proactive and creative approaches adopted by the staff.

- There is a vibrant culture of celebration throughout the school. Celebrating the holistic success of pupils and staff promotes the school's core values of community, dignity and worth.
- The pupils attain very well at GCSE level. The school has rightly prioritised improving the outcomes for pupils at post-16 level by, for example, providing more teaching time for all subjects taken in years 13 and 14.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced; it supports the pupils' progression to the next stage of their learning or employment.
- The whole-school commitment to careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG), including the flexible approach to work-related learning, extends the pupils' understanding of the world of work and informs well their choices at key transition points.
- The extensive educational, sporting, cultural and business links across local and international communities enhance significantly the pupils' learning experiences, including the development and application of an important range of wider skills.
- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection and adult protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Areas for consideration:

- planning and implementing strategies for adaptive teaching to meet better the needs of the pupils in every classroom; and
- monitoring, evaluation and review of the new arrangements for increased subject provision at post-16 level.

### **3. MAIN REPORT**

#### **A. SETTING THE VISION**

The vision and core values of St Kevin's College express clearly its collective aspiration to provide the very best for pupils, staff, families and wider school community in a welcoming, respectful and compassionate environment. The vision and values, which are rooted in the Gospels, are well known and shared, and imbue every aspect of the life and work of the school. The school's vision is of a stimulating, caring and safe learning environment which demonstrates equality, fosters spirituality and moral development and establishes strong links with home.



The school's rigorous self-evaluation process includes deep, wide and regular consultation with pupils, parents and staff and extends to the wider school community, including local businesses and services. In turn, the school's priorities for improvement are very well informed by the needs of the pupils, their families and the wider community. The school uses to good effect external award programmes to support and enhance its self-evaluation process and to improve pupil and staff wellbeing and engagement. Recent awards include the Investors in People Gold Award (2024), Autism NI Impact Award (2023) and School Impact - Staff Wellbeing Silver Award (2024).

The governors, who met with inspectors, referenced the vision and values of St Kevin's College as the driver for the success of the amalgamation and subsequent new school. They are proud of the proactive and impactful role the school plays in the local community and understand fully its unique context. The governors are active in, and contribute to, the life and work of the school and value that the provision is underpinned by meaningful collaboration between the pupils and adults in the school, but also between the school and the wider community it serves.

## **B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION**

The pupils are mostly well motivated and ready to learn. When given opportunities, they work well in groups, can articulate and discuss their learning and are able to reflect and act on feedback from their teachers to improve their work. During the inspection, their behaviour was exemplary.

The school has a clear vision for high-quality learning and teaching. The re-established processes for monitoring the effectiveness of planning and teaching are at an early stage and include revised systems for observing lessons and sampling pupils' work. The new approaches are helping to identify what is going well with the pupils' learning and what could be better. In turn, the school has identified appropriately the need to standardise the approach to medium- and long- term subject planning. It will be important that this improvement work includes planning for strategies for adaptive teaching to meet better the wide range of abilities, needs and interests of the pupils in every classroom.

In the more effective classroom practice, the well-structured lessons included explicit planning for thinking and clear learning aims which built well on previous knowledge to shape the next steps in learning. Where learning was most successful, skilful questioning extended the pupils' responses and reflection time helped them to identify areas for improvement and deepen understanding. In lessons where learning was less successful, there was over direction by the teacher and insufficient planning for meeting the needs of all of the pupils.

In line with its vision to provide a stimulating learning environment and promote independence, the school is in the early stages of developing the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance the learning and teaching. As a result of a well-considered programme of professional learning around AI, the staff are becoming more confident in using it appropriately across the curriculum.

The pupils at key stage (KS) 3 benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum at KS 4 and post-16 is kept under review, adjusted annually in light of the pupils' preferences and meets fully the requirements of the Entitlement Framework.

At each KS, there is an appropriate balance of general and applied subjects. The curricular offer is extended through ongoing collaboration at post-16 level with the school's nearest post-primary school and at KS 4 with the local college of further education. A creative approach to the curriculum at KS 4 for a small group of pupils at risk of disengaging from their learning has resulted in improved attendance and better engagement. The enrichment programme for all year 13 pupils, aspects of which are accredited, includes a suitable range of opportunities for spiritual development, sports coaching, practical cookery, hairdressing and photography. Pupils from all year groups benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

The highly effective whole-school approach to CEIAG is evident in the school's commitment to providing discrete careers lessons across all year groups and in the work to infuse CEIAG across the curriculum. The provision for CEIAG is supported well by work experience for all pupils in year 12, regular communication about other work-related learning and by the school's flexible approach to further work experience at post-16. The CEIAG provision has been enhanced further by the introduction of an online platform which supports job and skills research and personal career planning. The quality of the work in CEIAG was recognised in June 2024 when the school gained the Investors in Careers award.

The school's core values permeate its preventative curriculum. Pupils benefit from assemblies, taught classes and links with a wide range of external agencies, to promote their health and wellbeing and to raise their awareness of keeping safe. Pupils told us that their preventative curriculum enables them to make informed decisions around how they respect themselves, others and their community, and this came across strongly in the pupil questionnaires. The school has taken a carefully considered approach to the development of RSE which is currently being piloted. The approach includes a rigorous review and selection of resources from other jurisdictions, consultation and feedback from pupils and parents, and the identification of a core team of teachers willing to deliver a programme of RSE. It will be important to evaluate the effectiveness of this work through observing the pupils' learning experiences to inform further planning.

The health and wellbeing of pupils is prioritised in St Kevin's College and is supported through, for example, a nurturing learning environment, a free breakfast club, fridges stocked with fresh food which is free to everyone and sensory provision across the school. In discussions with inspectors, the pupils reported that they feel safe and secure in school. They know what to do and who to speak to if they have any concerns about their safety or wellbeing.

## **C. BUILDING EQUITY**

The pupils benefit greatly from the provision within the areas of the school designated to support their emotional health and wellbeing; the provision is warm and welcoming. The staff's proactive and creative approaches help pupils overcome challenges and barriers to their learning and include withdrawal support, mentoring, dog and art therapy, sensory rooms and a wide range of social, behavioural and emotional wellbeing strategies. The pupils told us how they use helpful strategies to manage their emotions, ask for help, talk to others, address issues and deal restoratively with conflict; they value learning in a strong community where their diverse needs and aspirations are welcomed. This support impacts positively on the pupils' attendance and their attitudes and dispositions to learning.

The staff know the pupils well and understand how to identify and address barriers to learning at an early stage. Their wide range of opportunities for staff professional learning impacts to good effect on how they enable pupils, through trauma-informed practice, to engage meaningfully and make progress by adapting resources and environments and using their views to inform next steps. Supporting pupils to overcome challenges and barriers to learning is an area from which others might learn. This includes support to overcome aspects of social disadvantage as well as addressing social, behavioural and emotional wellbeing needs, using restorative practice. The strategies that are working well need to be embedded more consistently for the pupils in every classroom and by all staff. Pupil-led support across the school includes peer mentors, addressing bullying ambassadors and SEN ambassadors.

The school's commitment to reducing educational disadvantage and its effectiveness in supporting the pupils' holistic development is reflected in its Families First Quality Award and Investors in Pupils' Award.

Through close links with feeder primary schools, the pupils identified with SEN are supported effectively from the moment they enter the school. Appropriately, the school is introducing personal learning plans to detail more specifically individualised learning and wellbeing strategies across subjects.

## **D. EMBEDDING SUCCESS**

The school monitors the pupils' progress from their respective starting points through the analysis of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative information. Last year, almost all of the year 12 pupils (98%) attained five GCSE or equivalent qualifications at grades A\* to C. Most of the pupils (88%) attained five GCSE or equivalent qualifications at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics. For most of the pupils leaving at the end of post-16, there is suitable progression to the next stage of their learning. The school has identified appropriately the need to improve the pupils' attainment at GCE A level and equivalent and, during this year, well thought through arrangements such as increased teaching time are in place to support the pupils to achieve better at this level. It will be important to keep the impact of these arrangements under review.



There is a vibrant culture of celebration in St Kevin's College. The school is passionate about acknowledging what the pupils do well, both inside school and beyond, and takes the time to celebrate through, for example, assemblies, celebration events, photobooks, the annual prize giving ceremony, and on the college website and social media platforms. There is a well-embedded merit system across the school which motivates the pupils to engage positively in their learning by recognising successes such as perseverance, excellence and attendance. Rates of attendance in St Kevin's College have not had the dip experienced across post-primary schools in recent years; last year's percentage attendance was 95.5 per cent. The pupils develop very well their personal and communication skills through a range of leadership opportunities and the school takes great pride in celebrating the pupils' talents and creativity through events such as music and drama performances. The pupils are benefiting from an extensive range of charity and community events which are integral to the school's Catholic ethos, fostering spiritual and moral development and encouraging them to show compassion to others. The work of a group of pupils, carried out in veneration of the teenager Carlo Acutis, is broadening the pupils' horizons through, for example, their collaboration with, and imminent visit to, a school in Kenya.

The school places a high priority on staff wellbeing and belonging. The staff feel valued, and their achievements and contributions to school life are celebrated regularly through, for example, an internal awards programme.

## **E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING**

The very strong sense of community in St Kevin's College is testament to how the school strives to achieve its vision. The positive working relationships at all levels are based on trust and reflect fully the school's commitment to create the right conditions for developing and growing a community of learning. The school fosters a values-driven classroom, helping staff to connect with the pupils, developing in them real-life skills that will carry beyond the classroom. The school core values are referenced in, and aligned to, the planning for learning.

Staff professional learning is closely aligned to the school's vision, the priorities for development and the changing needs of the pupils. To support the significant number of teachers at an early stage in their careers, the school has established a 'buddy system' in which these teachers are linked with more experienced staff.

The school has established extensive links within the local community. Local businesses and employers support well the pupils' formal education and holistic development and facilitate work-related learning. Additionally, a business links governor has been appointed to strengthen these relationships within the community. A wide range of local businesses, agencies and charities provide valuable practical and financial support which enables the college to help pupils and families facing financial difficulties.

Some subject departments work with the feeder schools to establish links with the primary school children to help support a smooth and effective transition and to extend the learning, and develop the skills of the primary and post-primary learners; for example, post-16 pupils lead on science projects. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association is active in raising funds for the school and publicising and running the uniform swap shop which gives families access to new or good-quality pre-loved uniform items at a reduced or no cost.

The pupils feel listened to. Members of the student council and members of the year 13 support group, who met with inspectors, gave practical examples of how their views had led to changes in, for example, adapting the rules relating to uniform. The pupils' views also informed the development of a new RSE policy. The post-16 pupils spoke very positively about their role as peer mentors in supporting the younger pupils.

Extending the pupils' international experiences, post-16 pupils learning Mandarin have enjoyed the valuable experience of visiting a university in China and pupils studying Spanish benefitted from an exchange trip with a school in Spain.

## **F. CHILD PROTECTION**

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child and adult protection align to the current statutory guidance.

## **4. GOING FORWARD**

Underpinning the vision of St Kevin's College is a strong, real and well-embedded set of core values. These values are the foundation upon which the college strives successfully to do its best for every pupil. The school is welcoming and caring and has well-established links within and beyond the school community that benefit the pupils on many levels.

Inspectors identified aspects of highly effective practice from which others may learn. The aspects of practice which should be shared more widely include:

- supporting pupils to overcome challenges and barriers to learning and in particular barriers associated with social disadvantage; and
- addressing social, behavioural and emotional wellbeing needs, using a restorative practice approach.

Through the work of the district inspector, ETI will continue to monitor the progress of St Kevin's College in addressing the areas for consideration as laid out in this report.

## 5. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE TERMS

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

## **APPENDIX 2: HEALTH AND SAFETY**

1. Three of the temporary classrooms should not be in use due to potential restricted exit in the case of an emergency.

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