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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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Standard Inspection

Armagh Integrated College

Inspected: May 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Armagh Integrated College opened in September 2004 and is situated in temporary accommodation on the outskirts of Armagh City. It is a grant maintained integrated co-educational school for pupils aged 11-16, with a current enrolment of 142 pupils up to key stage (KS) 3. The school draws its pupils from a wide geographical area. The school reports that 19% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and that 26% of the pupils in years 8 to 10 have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN).

At the time of the inspection, the day-to-day running of the school was the responsibility of an acting-principal who was appointed by the Board of Governors (governors) in February 2007.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on leadership and management at all levels across the school, and, in addition, on the provision for mathematics, science and SEN. The inspection also evaluated the school's provision for pastoral care, including child protection.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE GOVERNORS, PARENTS, PUPILS AND TEACHERS

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the completion of questionnaires by parents, as well as meetings with the governors and some parents, and with groups of pupils from years 8, 9 and 10. Prior to the inspection, 133 confidential questionnaires were sent to the parents of pupils attending the school; 54 (41%) of the parents responded, and 43 of these provided additional written comments, many of which were detailed. The responses from the questionnaires and the comments from the parents indicated, in a minority of cases, satisfaction with the work of the school. In particular, these responses mentioned that their children were well-settled and happy in the school and received good support from their teachers.

The returns from the parental questionnaires, however, also indicated significant levels of dissatisfaction with the work and management of the school. Of particular concern to the parents were:

- the instability and lack of continuity in the leadership of the school;
- the disruption to their children's education by the high levels of absenteeism of a significant minority of the teachers;
- the lack of resources and facilities to support the full delivery of the Northern Ireland curriculum (NIC);
- the low standing of the school in the community;

- the amount of bullying and the effectiveness of the arrangements for dealing with such incidents; and
- the lack of consistency in the implementation of the school's homework policy.

A minority of families have recently transferred their children to other schools. The areas of concern raised by the parents through the questionnaires have been reported orally to the Acting-Principal and the governors. It is the view of the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) that the concerns of the parents are well founded. Some of these concerns are dealt with, where appropriate, in the main body of this report.

During the past year, working relationships between the governors and the Principal and some of the teachers have been poor. The relationships between the governors and some of the parents are also poor. In addition, there is evidence of strained working relationships between some of the teachers. These difficulties are having a detrimental effect on the management and organisation of the school, and on the morale of the teachers. They are also impacting adversely on the development of the pastoral and curricular provision of the school. This situation has been exacerbated by the lack of continuity in the leadership and management of the school. Since 2004, the school has been led by four different principals, in a permanent or acting capacity.

Many of the governors were involved in the campaign to bring integrated education to Armagh and they remain committed to the development of the school. The governors report a lack of experience and expertise in undertaking effectively many of the complex duties associated with governance, including the key role of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The governors report also that they received very little support, strategic guidance or training to equip them with the necessary competence to address effectively the range of issues which they faced, since the school opened in 2004. They recognise that this has resulted in them being less effective than they would like to be in the pursuit of their strategic objectives and the realisation of their vision for the school. Recent appointments to the governors have the potential to make them more effective in guiding the development of the school.

The Department of Education (DE) and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) as appropriate, need to be more proactive in ensuring that the composition of the governors in a new school such as Armagh Integrated College, has an appropriate mix of educational experience and expertise, along with the necessary support and guidance to undertake effectively the full range of duties. The Inspectorate recommend, in particular, that DE exercise its power under Article 14 of the Education (NI) Order, 1998, to appoint additional voting members to the governors at an appropriate stage of a school's development.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE AND CHILD PROTECTION

Since taking up her temporary appointment in February 2007, the Acting-Principal has initiated a major review of the child protection arrangements within the school. The groups of pupils from years 8, 9 and 10, with whom the inspectors met and held discussions during the inspection, reported that they knew whom to turn to in the event of a concern. The guidelines for the vetting procedures, as detailed in the DE Circulars 2006/7/8/9, to guide

practice for all staff are not yet fully implemented. Formal procedures, which enable the staff to apply the guidelines outlined in the DE Circular 1999/10, 'Pastoral Care in School: Child Protection', are not operating effectively. In addition, there is a need to review and implement the positive behaviour and anti-bullying policies in line with the recommendations of Circular 2003/13, 'Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order.'

As a matter of urgency, there is a need for: the communication of all pastoral care policies, including the child protection policy and referral system, to the parents and pupils; appropriate training on child protection issues to be completed by all staff and the designated governor, and the establishment of a critical incident book within the school for child protection issues. As this important aspect of educational provision is taken forward, it will be essential for all members of the teaching staff to work collegially to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the programme for pastoral care and child protection.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient breadth and progression in the pupils' mathematical experiences; most of the pupils are underachieving and display negative attitudes to mathematics. There is an urgent need for a clear agenda for improvement.

2.2 SCIENCE

Until recently the pupils have had a limited range of practical experiences in science. Consequently their practical skills and understanding of some key concepts are underdeveloped, and their enjoyment of the subject has been restricted. The standards achieved by most of the pupils in the subject are not good enough. There is a need for the effective co-ordination of science across the school.

2.3 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of teaching for the pupils with special educational needs varies considerably. In the better practice observed, the teachers have high expectations of all of the pupils and use inclusive and supportive strategies to motivate them, resulting in a high standard of work. In around one-half of the subjects, however, the teachers do not plan or differentiate the activities adequately.

2.4 ACCOMMODATION

The school re-located to its current site from temporary accommodation in Armagh City at the beginning of the academic year. All of the school buildings are of a temporary, mobile nature. Many are small and are poorly equipped. The lack or unsuitability of specialist accommodation, in particular for science, art and design, physical education and technology and design, restricts the capacity of the teachers to deliver many aspects of the NIC. This situation will be exacerbated next year when the school will have to deliver the curriculum at KS3 and 4.

2.5 TEACHING AND LEARNING

In the majority of lessons observed during the inspection the quality of teaching was sound or better; it was excellent in around one-fifth of the lessons. In contrast, in just under one-third of the lessons there were more weaknesses than strengths in the quality of the teaching.

2.6 SUMMARY

2.6.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the motivation and engagement of the pupils when the lessons are well planned and resourced;
- the quality of the provision for the pupils with special educational needs in approximately one-half of subjects;
- the outstanding quality of the teaching in lessons observed in English, art and design and history; and
- the good work of the Acting-Principal who has endeavoured to improve the pupils' experiences, in constrained and challenging circumstances.

2.6.2 The areas for improvement include the need to address, as a matter of urgency:

- the deficiencies in the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection;
- important aspects of the ethos;
- the inconsistencies in the pupils' learning experiences, along with a clear focus on improving the standards they achieve;
- the unsatisfactory provision for mathematics;
- the significant deficiencies in the school's curricular provision; and
- the lack of stability and continuity in the strategic management, leadership and staffing of the school at all levels.

3. CONCLUSION

The inspection has identified major shortcomings in the school's work. The poor relationships between many of the key stakeholders in the school are having a detrimental affect on the quality of education being provided for the pupils. It is essential that the governors, the Acting-Principal and the staff address urgently the unsatisfactory situation identified in this report. There is a need for them to work together to implement an effective recovery plan which will re-engage and motivate the pupils, and improve the confidence of staff, parents and the wider community.

The Inspectorate will undertake a follow-up inspection, before the end of the school year, to evaluate the actions taken and planned to address the deficiencies identified in the school's arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. In addition, at regular intervals, the Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing all of the areas for improvement identified during this inspection.

As a matter of urgency, the school should seek support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) officers from the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) to take forward the issues identified in this report.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1.i. School: Armagh Integrated College
 vi. ii.School Reference Number: 5260307
 iii. Age Range: 11-16
 iv. Status: Grant Maintained Integrated
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 21.05.07
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 vii. Number of Families: 133

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 8 Intake	50	56	45
Total enrolment	52	99	142

1.3 Attendance

Year 2003/04	8	9	10	Average 2005/06	NI Average 2004/05
% Attendance	93.2	88.6	n/a	90.9	91

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact):
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):

Year 2006/07	8	9	10	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	17	31	30	78
Enrolment: Girls	26	16	22	64
Enrolment: Total	43	47	52	142
PTR				

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