



*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



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**City of Armagh High School
Co Armagh**

January 2015

FOLLOW-UP TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION OF CITY OF ARMAGH HIGH SCHOOL, ARMAGH, BT61 7JH (521-0121)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection¹ of City of Armagh High School in October 2012, when the quality of education was evaluated as satisfactory. The report highlighted a range of strengths in the curriculum provided at key stage (KS) 3 and KS4 in a range of subjects including mathematics, careers education, information, advice and guidance, and with the provision for special educational needs, including the learning support centre.

The areas for improvement included the need to address shortcomings in leadership and management, including in school development planning, self-evaluation and governance; to improve the quality of learning and teaching; to raise the levels of achievement at GCSE level, particularly in English; and to review urgently the viability of the school sixth form.

ETI carried out interim follow-up visits (IFUV) in January and in October 2014, with a follow-up inspection (FUI) in January 2015. The school's action plan took appropriate account of the areas for improvement and the school has received effective support from a range of external services, including the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service of the Southern Education and Library Board.

Since the original inspection, the context of the school has changed considerably:

- subsequent to the retirement of the principal and vice-principal, a new principal, and vice-principal have been appointed;
- the ability of the year 8 intake attaining at the expected level at KS 2 has fallen by 10 and 20 percentage points in English and mathematics respectively;
- the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs has increased from one in five to more than one in three;
- 44 pupils have statements of educational need, which is an increase from 17;
- the proportion of newcomers has increased by 50%; and
- the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals has almost doubled to two fifths of the enrolment.

There have been a number of important improvements since the last inspection. The improvements are reflected in very high levels of satisfaction in the returns from pre-inspection parent and staff questionnaires.

- Under the leadership of the new principal, who has been in post since September 2013, the senior leadership team (SLT) has been restructured and members have been given clearly-defined roles and responsibilities.
- The special educational needs coordinator and the head of the learning support centres have joined the SLT, and are leading teams in developing a more collegial, collaborative approach to the planning and provision for the growing proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

¹ See standard inspection report at <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/inspection-reports/inspection-reports-post-primary/inspection-reports-post-primary-2013/standard-inspection-city-of-armagh-high-school.pdf>

- The SLT are working with well-organised groups of teachers to take forward effective action planning which addresses appropriately all of the issues raised in the original inspection report.
- The school development plan which was, at the time of the original inspection not compliant with statutory regulations, has now been replaced and is fully compliant.
- Management information systems have been introduced to record the pupils' assessment outcomes, and their behaviour and attendance; the data is used effectively to inform target setting, monitoring of progress and the use of intervention strategies, including pupil mentoring.
- The teachers, especially those who are the only teacher of their subject, are sharing their practice for the purpose of improvement.
- Some significant curriculum developments ensure that the curriculum at KS4 now meets more appropriately the needs, interests and abilities of pupils.
- There are significant improvements in the quality of the provision for English, including a focus on talking, listening and extended writing across the school.

In the lessons observed, the quality of the learning and teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good, with just over four fifths of lessons good and very good. In the more effective practice, the pupils were motivated and engaged; there was a range of appropriate active learning strategies used; and the pupils who required additional support with aspects of their learning were supported well by the staff and by their peers. On a few occasions, the lessons were over-directed, lacked pace in learning and expectations were too low.

The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE examinations (or equivalents) including English and mathematics has increased from 17% at the time of the original inspection to 30%; this a movement from significantly below, to almost in line with the standard for schools in the same free school meals category. The standards in GCSE English language at grades A*-C have improved from a low in 2012 of 17.5% to 51.2% in 2014, which is in line with the standard for similar schools.

Overall, there have been a number of improvements since the time of the original inspection, and important aspects of leadership and management which were inadequate, are now satisfactory. The quality of care, guidance and support, which was originally satisfactory, is now good. The provision for English remains satisfactory, with a need to continue to raise further the improving standards.

The quality of education provided by the school remains satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The FUI has identified the need:

- to continue to raise further the improving standards attained by the pupils;
- for the school to improve further the effectiveness of self-evaluation; and
- for the employing authority, governors and the staff to plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the sixth-form provision, which remains unviable, in order to address more effectively the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will carry out a further follow-up inspection within the next 12-18 months and a report will be published.

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