



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

**Focus School, Magherafelt
County Londonderry**

December 2015

A FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF FOCUS SCHOOL, MAGHERAFELT (IS89)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of Focus School, Knockloughrim Campus, in October 2013 when the quality of the provision was evaluated as satisfactory¹.

The main areas for improvement were the need for:

- greater consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the year groups;
- more effective use and analysis of performance data to raise further the learners' attainment; and
- more rigorous monitoring of the school's improvement planning processes.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding the learners were evaluated as unsatisfactory, due to the high numbers of volunteers who had not undergone the appropriate vetting procedures.

A follow-up inspection took place in December 2015.

In the interval since the original inspection, the following changes and actions which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the appointment of a new temporary head teacher in September 2015. The Focus Learning Trust has employed a former principal to support and mentor the head teacher in her new role; and
- new co-ordinators have been appointed for learning and teaching, standards, self-directed learning and, respectively, for the secondary and the primary provision.

Key findings

- A well-conceived school improvement plan has been drawn up to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection, with clear processes for monitoring the school's progress against the targets.
- Through the appointment of a temporary head teacher and co-ordinators, the school has established a model of distributed leadership, with clear roles and responsibilities for leading the improvement work within the delegated areas of responsibility.
- The continuous professional development and capacity-building programmes for teachers and co-ordinators are a high priority, providing staff with appropriate opportunities, for example, to access training and observe best practice in other schools.
- The co-ordinator for learning and teaching has facilitated short weekly sessions when all of the teachers have opportunities to share and disseminate good practice on a collegial basis.

¹ From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as satisfactory will now be reported as having important areas for improvement.

- All of the lessons observed, in the primary and post-primary classes, were effective in promoting learning; the majority of lessons observed during the follow-up inspection were highly effective.
- Through a questionnaire, the senior pupils have been consulted about their learning and identified independent learning as an area for development. This target is, appropriately, integral to the learning and teaching action plan.
- The school council has been re-convened and enables the pupils to be more fully involved in the decision-making process.
- The pupils in sixth form benefit from a mentoring programme which is facilitated by school staff, past pupils and members of the local community.
- The vetting of all members of staff and all volunteers has been completed. The school has put in place a system for review every three years.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of inspection, the school's arrangements for safeguarding young people are comprehensive. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the pupils reported that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they are concerned about their safety or well-being.

Overall effectiveness

The school 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:

- developing and embedding the analysis and use of performance data to raise further the standards attained by the pupils; and
- building further the capacity of the co-ordinators to monitor, evaluate and review the improvement work within their respective areas of responsibility.

The school should continue to be registered for education.

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