

North Coast Integrated College

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

AND THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Evidence from North Coast Integrated College, Coleraine

North Coast Integrated College is a grant maintained integrated non-selective 11 – 18 school. A standard Post Primary Inspection was carried during the week of 26th November 2012. The inspection report was published on 17th April 2013.

Summary of findings of the inspection:

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Inadequate
Provision for Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

Context of the North Coast Integrated taken from the inspection report.

North Coast Integrated College draws most of its pupils from the town of Coleraine. The school is working in challenging circumstances: there is a downward trend in the year 8 intake, a significant number of pupils have a range of complex social, emotional and learning issues, key stage (KS) 2 outcomes for pupils entering the school are low and there is a high and growing percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, which is almost half of the pupils in years 8-12 in the current academic year.

1.1 The Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement and how/whether ETI properly assesses the value-added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment

During the introduction, which was presented to the team of inspectors on the first day, the Senior Leadership Team gave evidence which demonstrated the decreasing ability of the pupils from Key Stage 2 results and Cognitive Ability Tests. I believe that the inspectors did not take into consideration the decreasing ability of the pupils and give recognition to the performance of these pupils in GCSE exams.

The outcome of the inspection has resulted in Post Inspection action plans which have been forwarded on to the Department of Education. However the ETI have identified some areas in the Raising Standards action plan.

“The current targets for Years 11 and 12 that the school has provided are too low and would be a cause of concern, particularly when one matches such targets against the percentages for Level 5 + grades awarded at the end of key stage 3 for these cohorts in previous years.....

A minimum of 25% A* – C with English and maths. Expectations need to be raised, if the school is to raise standards for the pupils. 25% remains a low outcome.”

July 2013 letter from standards and improvement team to the Chair of the Board of Governors

The targets that have been set were based on knowledge and ability of the pupils. It is unrealistic to expect rise upon rise each year when the ability of the pupils continues to fall. Expecting a continual increase each year would suggest that the teachers in the school are not performing in the first instance. This is not the case. The performance of pupils tested at a end point is in reality, irrelevant when the ability of the pupils is ignored.

1.2 The key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards to help schools improve.

To achieve the targets that have been set it is about focusing on pupils who will possibly have a D in maths or English and ensuring that those pupils have the extra push of teacher time and resources. In my view this is wrong, the pressure to increase results for statistical purposes means that those pupils who will never achieve grade C are losing out and the overall basic numeracy and literacy skills of these pupils will fall.

In the past maths and English teachers at NCIC always offered additional support to any pupil who was willing to stay behind after school. This can no longer happen because the focus has shifted from what is the best thing for all pupils to raising standards. There are not enough days in the week or English and maths teachers to allow all the extra classes which would allow all pupils to benefit. We are now unable to take pupils in Yr 13 or 14 who have not achieved their grade C in English and maths for extra classes because the focus has to be current Yr 11 and 12; those pupils who will affect statistics. (guidance from CASS). Not only is the focus to be only Year 11 and 12 but also pupils who are capable of achieving C in both English and maths. If a pupil is currently attaining a D in English (capable of getting a C with a push) but is sitting on an F in maths never able to achieve a C. We have been advised by CASS that this pupil should not be offered additional support in English because they will not improve our statistics.

1.3 Alternative inspection/improvement approaches which might better assess value-added and recognise improvement by schools.

At present there is no acknowledgement of schools that are working in challenging circumstances and reporting the progress of pupils rather than assessing the final outcome. Reporting on the final outcome of pupils and using this as a benchmark of success has no credence.

1.4 The priorities and actions which need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process – does ETI need enhanced powers?; should ETI make more/any use of alternative measures of achievement (other than examination performance) to assess school performance?; should ETI be independent of the Department of Education (as Ofsted is)?; does ETI need a better complaints / feedback procedure? etc.; Do schools always understand the conclusions produced by ETI – is more transparency required in this regard?

ETI does not need more powers; the current system does not give recognition to schools who teach in the most challenging of situations. It is unfair and biased towards schools who continue to carryout academic selection. It is failing the most needy pupils; pupils who are low ability and from low socio-economic backgrounds. It will ensure that the basic literacy and numeracy skills of these pupils will fall as the shift and the focus for

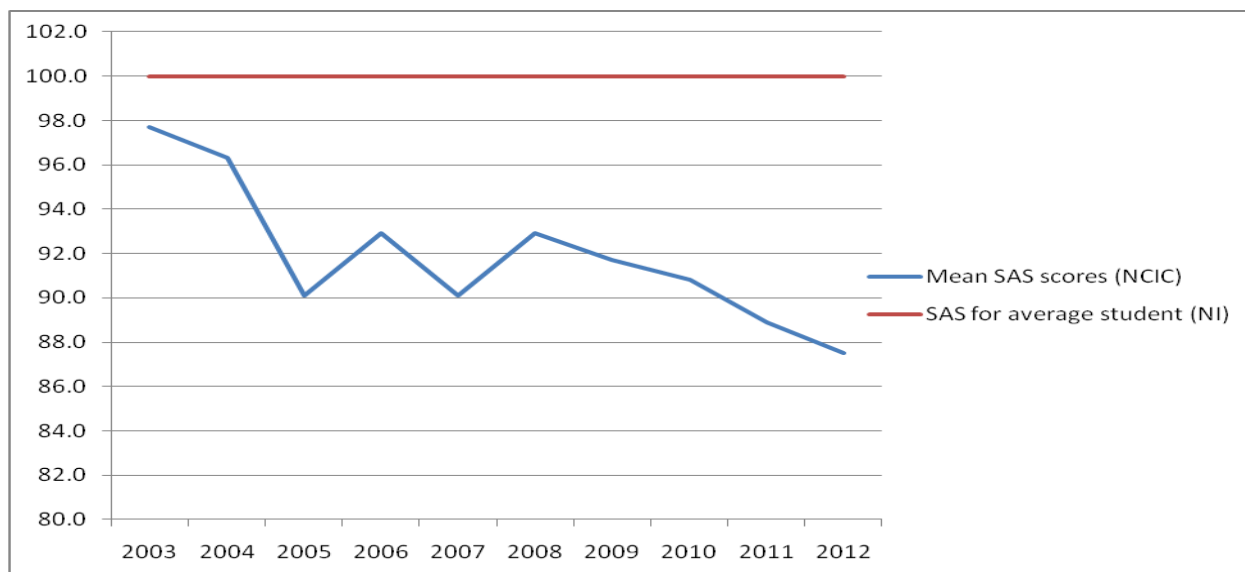
schools is statistics. It will encourage schools to continue to select the most able as long as there is no acknowledgement of pupil progress. It will encourage schools who select at the age of 12 on academic ability to also select for entry into Post 16. There are schools who tell pupils to leave at the end of Year 13 if a student has not met academic targets. Again, the focus on results at a particular end point reinforces this as good practice. As these schools of course have high academic standards and nestle safely at the top of any league table.

1.5 Other matters relating to ETI and the school improvement process that are worthy of further scrutiny.

The recent inspection in my school has turned a group of hard working, dedicated professionals who cared for all of the pupils in their care into demoralised and demotivated teachers who continue to teach and achieve progress for the neediest children.

The time span of the inspection was unsatisfactory; 21 weeks elapsed from inspection to published report. As the action plans have been returned by ETI we are still waiting for a visit from the District Inspector before the action plans can be resubmitted.

Appendix 1 Results for North Coast Integrated College



Graph Showing Mean Standardised Age Scores for Year 8 pupils

Year 8 Intake

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/2012	2012/2013
% of Year 8 pupils with Level 5 English	0	*	*	*
% of Year 8 pupils with Level 5 maths	*	*	*	*

*fewer than 5

GCSE Performance

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/2012
NCIC % of Year 12 achieving at least Grade C in 5 or more subjects	57	61	70
NCIC % of Year 12 achieving at least Grade C in 5 or more subjects including English and maths.	31	22	19