



Laurelhill Community College

A broader curriculum and focused performance dashboard links to improved outcomes

Laurelhill Community College is an 11-18 co-educational school located in the city of Lisburn.

The focus of this case study is the school's increasing strengths, notably the development of a broad curriculum which meets the needs of the pupils and the school's monitoring and evaluation strategy.

The school entered the formal intervention process in October 2011 following an inspection conducted by the Education and Training Inspectorate which found the overall provision in the school to be inadequate.

The areas identified for improvement in this initial inspection included the need to:

- improve the standards achieved by pupils
- stabilise leadership and strengthen the management at all levels to effect improvement
- make more effective use of data analysis to guide planning for improvement
- disseminate the most effective learning and teaching strategies.

A follow-up inspection published in December 2017 identified important improvements made in the provision and concluded that the overall quality of education was good.

Working towards improvement

Over the intervention period the school has developed an established senior management team, the members of which take an active role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching which includes conducting classroom observation.

Departmental heads and senior management have engaged in implementing an appropriate system of target-setting for pupil attainment and a dashboard of progress measures has been established which includes a range of data and other evaluative information. This is shared with the governors, who, consequently, are better informed about progress throughout the school.

A curriculum has been designed and implemented which effectively meets the learning needs

and career pathways of the pupils.

The most recent inspection report identified a consistent improvement in the standards achieved by the pupils and the quality of leadership and management at every level throughout the school.

Developing a broader curriculum

Prior to the 2011 inspection the school offered a traditional curriculum to pupils at KS4. Whilst most pupils were entered for five or more GCSEs, the number achieving five or more grades at A*-C were well below the Northern Ireland average for similar schools.

It was decided to explore a wider range of options for the pupils. Subjects allowing the pupils a range of progression pathways were identified, and the pupils given good quality careers advice so that they selected the most appropriate pathway.

The senior management team set the strategic direction for curriculum development. Heads of department and other middle managers were given the responsibility of researching and preparing new courses.

The pupils responded well to more stimulating subjects which include leisure, travel and tourism and motor vehicle and road user studies. The performance in external examinations have improved to the extent that in 2017, results were above the Northern Ireland average for similar schools. A greater number of pupils are also staying on to continue their studies at post-16 level.

Monitoring and evaluating

As part of the monitoring and evaluation strategy introduced after the inspection the senior team generated a 'performance dashboard'. This is a condensed summary of some of the key performance indicators which is updated regularly and which the senior management team discuss during their meetings.

The performance dashboard displays an easily accessible range of data including:

- staff information relating to absence, cover and deployment
- a summary of the subject targets that have been agreed with the SMT and the current progress towards achieving these targets
- a principal's report which covers areas such as pastoral information
- a curriculum update which includes information such as subject interventions that have taken place to date
- SEN information
- extra-curricular news
- a matrix showing school policy review timeframes.

The dashboard is an important resource at governor's meetings, allowing them to exercise their

monitoring function effectively. Time spent at Boards of Governor meetings is focused on aspects of school performance and improvement. This is reinforced through individual members of the SMT meeting with governors at regular intervals to discuss progress in the areas of the school development plan for which they have responsibility.

Summary

The school has made significant progress, however, this took longer than anticipated. This was largely due to the need to develop fully a senior leadership team which was able to take on delegated responsibilities for key aspects of the improvement agenda.

Staff changes at senior level meant that this was not as smooth a process as the principal desired. Nevertheless, a culture of continuous improvement through monitoring and evaluation has been established and has created a positive culture of achievement throughout the school.

For further information, please contact:

Laurelhill Community College

Website: <https://www.laurelhillcollege.org/>

Email: info@laurelhill.lisburn.ni.sch.uk

Phone: 028 9260 7351

The Controlled Schools' Support Council

Website: www.csscni.org.uk

Email: info@csscni.org.uk

Twitter: @CSSC_NI

Phone: 028 9531 3030