

Report of a Post-primary Inspection
Loreto College, Coleraine

September 2024



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1. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Loreto College is a voluntary grammar, co-educational 11-18 school. The school is over-subscribed and has grown significantly since June 2018 from an enrolment around 850 pupils to the current figure of 998. It ceased the use of academic selection as a criterion for entry in 2013. The college is part of a global network of schools which promotes the Loreto ethos and philosophy of education.

The proportion of pupils with free school meals entitlement is just under 16%, which is slightly below the same measure since 2020-21. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs (SEN) has increased from 95 pupils in 2020-21 to 128 currently. There has been an increase in the number of pupils with a statement of educational need, from 19 pupils in 2020-21 to 28 pupils for the current year.

The school has a small number of newcomer pupils and it has a shared education link with Coleraine Grammar School.

B. VIEWS OF PUPILS, PARENTS AND STAFF

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to pupils, parents and staff in advance of the inspection.

Just over three-fifths of all pupils responded to the questionnaire and the responses were generally positive. Nearly all of the pupils reported that they enjoy school and find lessons challenging and interesting to varying degrees. Almost all of the pupils feel they are treated with care and respect by the adult staff.

A significant minority of parents responded to the questionnaire: their responses, in the main, indicated high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the provision. Nearly all indicated that their child was happy in school and was making good progress. Almost all indicated that they knew about the school's vision and aims and would recommend the school to others.

Almost all of the teachers responded to the questionnaire and their responses were highly positive. Nearly all of the teachers who responded believe they benefit from attentive staff welfare and effective teacher professional learning, and feel their views are sought after, valued and acted upon.

A majority of support staff and learning support staff responded to the questionnaires and their responses were positive overall. All feel that staff welfare is promoted effectively to varying degrees and the majority feel their views are sought after, valued and acted upon.

A number of written individual concerns expressed by pupils, parents, support staff and teachers was shared with senior leaders and representatives of the governors.

C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION

The ETI worked alongside the school to consider how well the school:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- The school lives out well the Loreto vision promoting well high academic expectations, spiritual growth and individual and social responsibility.
- The curriculum is a strength, including the well-planned preventative curriculum which addresses contemporary issues highly effectively.
- The school places high value on high academic outcomes; the standards attained by pupils in public examinations are mostly in line with, or exceed, these expectations.
- The planning, teaching and assessment during the inspection were mostly effective; pupils benefit from the teachers' very secure subject knowledge and good levels of challenge and support. More explicit differentiation in lessons would improve further the provision.
- The pupils thrive through their participation in a wide range of challenging and interesting lessons and enrichment and leadership opportunities.
- The pupils benefit from the well-established collaborative networks, allowing them to participate in local and global communities of learning.
- The school embeds and celebrates a wide range of pupil successes extremely well.
- The pupils' and staff's emotional health and wellbeing are given high priority.
- The staff professional learning is prioritised, well informed and responsive to need. Developing the capacity of middle management has been identified by the school as the next step for further improvement.

- The pupils have a strong sense of pride in, and belonging to, their school.
- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Areas for action:

- to continue building the leadership skills of the middle management; and
- to ensure the outworking of the effective planning for differentiation occurs as needed across all lessons.

3. MAIN REPORT

A. SETTING THE VISION

The Loreto vision inspires pupils to grow physically, spiritually, intellectually and emotionally in a caring environment guided by Gospel values. This vision is the legacy of Mary Ward and the [religious order of Loreto sisters](#), who founded the school. Today the college strives for 'spirituality and excellence', for all members of its school community in every aspect of its work, particularly the academic. Pupils are encouraged to achieve highly, care for others and be agents of social change.

The Loreto philosophy of education is kept alive today across a global network of over 150 Loreto schools. High academic achievement, personal growth and living out the Loreto values characterise the outworking of the college's vision.

The good quality school development plan articulates the vision very clearly. The three-year plan is comprehensive, ambitious and strives for academic excellence and individual and spiritual growth within the [Loreto values](#). The strengths in how the college implements its vision and ethos through whole school planning into implementation in its daily work is an area highlighted for dissemination, from which other schools may learn.

The Governors, who met with the inspectors, are 'Loreto to the core', in that they have a strong affiliation to the Loreto ethos and are extremely proud of how this distinct ethos affects positively the pupils' formation and how well they develop and achieve. They have a thorough understanding of the school's context and know well the life and work of the school.

B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

The pupils are well motivated, articulate and display positive attitudes to learning. They work well individually and collaboratively. They approach lessons with positivity and engage confidently in their learning; some of the pupils who met with inspectors are excellent ambassadors for their school.

The curriculum out-workings is a strength and an area for dissemination, from which other schools may learn. It is very well planned and is informed by the learners' interests, abilities and ambitions. Curriculum pathways are fluid and are responsive to individual ability, achievement and aspiration. The pupils have sufficient knowledge to make informed choices at transition points and pupil satisfaction levels are high regarding them getting the subject choices they want.

There is a strategic vision and rationale for the curriculum offered and it is well-led, monitored closely and kept under review. Robust self-evaluation of quantitative data and pastoral information inform learning pathways for the pupils.

All pupils benefit from a broad and balanced KS 3 curriculum. At KS 4 and post-16, the curriculum meets fully the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. There is an emphasis on academic subjects at KS 4 that reflects appropriately the pupil intake and the school's strong aspirations for all to enjoy academic excellence. The curriculum enables appropriate progression, with most of the pupils going on to undergraduate courses at a wide range of universities.

Pupil participation in the attractive and wide ranging extra-curricular offer is high, with most of the pupils indicating that they enjoy or benefit from one or more activities.

Careers education, information and guidance (CEIAG) is provided through well planned discrete careers lessons, modules within the schemes of work in learning for life and work and special events. At post-16 the pupils benefit from presentations by representatives from universities and former pupils, open days at universities, an information evening, guidance on student finance, interview practice and opportunities for work experience.

The well-planned, progressive preventative curriculum addresses relevant and contemporary issues and is supplemented with a wide range of bespoke external speakers, including a post-16 enrichment programme, to help pupils take care of their emotional health and wellbeing and equip them to make informed choices. The provision for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) across all the key stages is cohesive, age and stage appropriate and underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos and values. The school has identified the need to consult more fully with the pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of the preventative curriculum and the RSE programme.

C. BUILDING EQUITY

The college fosters an inclusive ethos, where pupils appreciate diversity and show care for one another. The school is wholly pupil-centred. All staff work hard to ensure all of the pupils experience enjoyment and achievement in their learning. Great emphasis is placed on ensuring that pupils are ready and supported to learn.

The college quickly identifies and supports pupils who may need additional assistance. Initiatives, such as, the daily free-to-all breakfast club and the sale of pre-worn uniforms promote inclusivity and environmental sustainability.

The pupils benefit greatly from the provision within the school's Pastoral Centre. The Pastoral Centre provides a comfortable and welcoming space for learning support, offering effective interventions in numeracy, literacy, and peer mentoring. It also runs well-monitored support programmes for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), promoting positive thinking, resilience, personal motivation, self-awareness, and independence. Pupils in KS 3 can also access peer mentoring which is led by the pupil leadership team. The pupils working in the centre at the time of the inspection described it as "special, unique and a place for everyone when they need it."

There is a clear and cohesive approach to planning the learning for pupils with SEN. The valuable 'teacher planning grids' are informed by the personal learning plans (PLPs) and allow individual subject teachers to identify strategies to support pupils across the curriculum by answering the question, 'How can I meet their needs?'

PLPs are bespoke and incorporate well pupil feedback. The college collaborates with various external agencies to support pupils and has a comprehensive staff professional learning programme.

The college has received the Autism Impact Award, Investors in Mental Health Award, and the 'Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing School' award. These accolades reflect the college's dedication to promoting the health and wellbeing of both pupils and staff.

D. EMBEDDING SUCCESS

Embedding success begins in the classroom and the planning, teaching and assessment were mostly effective. Teachers regularly praise and encourage the pupils to succeed. The teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and the more effective lessons were highly engaging and with appropriate support and challenge. There was effective planning for differentiation, but the out-workings seen in the lessons observed did not reflect fully the planning. The pupils would therefore benefit from further focus by the staff on the outworking of the planning for differentiation. The classroom walls displayed splendid examples of excellent pupil work and celebrated achievement well.

The college has developed, and uses extensively, a wide range of robust quantitative and qualitative data, obtained from a variety of academic and pastoral sources, to set whole school and individual pupil targets across all key stages. Over the last three years, the school's internal data demonstrates that the outcomes attained by pupils in public examinations are mostly in line with or exceed expectations. Pupil progress is monitored against set targets following each of the four assessment series during the year and interventions are put in place when needed. The college continues to achieve appropriately high academic outcomes for its pupils and this element of the school's work remains focused, robust and is at the core of their work on a daily basis.

The pupils' academic and other successes across, and beyond, the school are well embedded and celebrated through online media, assemblies, trips, prizegiving events, the 'pupil of the month' awards, community events, 'excellent boards' of pupil work and a range of external awards.

The school has invested heavily in a Derry GAA partnership by appointing a Games Promotional Officer (GPO) who affords members of the school community the opportunity to attain coaching badges as well as providing outreach work into Loreto College's many feeder primary schools.

The pupils who met with inspectors, spoke positively about personal achievements and successes in a wide range of learning and social justice opportunities, including: organising and taking part in charity and fundraising events; advocacy for those less fortunate, participating in the 'Justice League' outreach programme; involvement in the student council; becoming peer mentors and the 'Guardian Angel' programme; taking on prefect duties and being part of the pupil leadership team.

E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

Growing a community of learning is a strength of the college's provision. The college grows a thriving community of learning through being a faith community, a school community, and through its external links and partnerships.

The faith community is very strong. The school is linked to the [Loreto Educational Trust](#) in Ireland. The Trust ensures Loreto schools uphold the vision of holistic educational development, and the pupils benefit from proactive face-to-face engagement with the Trust and receiving a well-rounded education that encourages them to excel academically, while showing compassion for others through participation and advocacy in social justice initiatives and campaigns.

The school community is characterised by an emphasis on learning, participating and achieving. The pupils benefit from involvement in an extensive range of activities that allows them to participate in a wide range of sporting, cultural and social groups.

In discussions with the inspectors, the pupils who met with inspectors, spoke positively about personal achievements and successes in, for example, the school musical (West Side Story) and their sporting activities. Leadership opportunities are good and include: becoming prefects or peer mentors and having opportunities to be part of the pupil leadership team.

Collaborative links and partnerships developed by the school to support its wider curriculum delivery impact positively on the provision for the pupils. These include: external participation in a number of shared education projects with Coleraine Grammar School; being an active member of the Coleraine Area Learning Partnership (CALP); engaging in a range of projects with community groups, charities, business and sporting organisations; and the building of effective working relationships with external support agencies, feeder primary schools, local businesses and parents.

Staff professional learning is well considered and planned effectively. There is a responsive, practical and contemporary professional learning provision that reflects the school's vision and context. The senior leadership team oversee well the professional learning and identify priorities using audit and consultation methods. The school development plan identifies the need to build further the capacity of middle leaders following the period of action short of strike of teachers; the inspection would concur with the school's assessment.

Learner participation is effective. The student council are great ambassadors for their school and are conscious of their roles and responsibilities. They are articulate young leaders who are keen to represent others and report that their views are listened to and valued. Engaging and consulting with them in aspects of learning and teaching is the next step forward in its development.

In the questionnaires, most pupils stated they are proud to attend the school and most of the pupils who met with the inspectors reported that they are proud to be part of the "Loreto family", denoting a college with a strong community of learning.

F. CHILD PROTECTION

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance. The school is aware of changes in arrangements for adult protection and are planning to develop this further with all staff.

The pupils who met with inspectors reported that they feel safe and well cared for in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their wellbeing.

4. GOING FORWARD

Loreto College realises its vision through creating a supportive learning environment for its pupils to excel academically and develop spiritually as confident individuals who have self-respect and show compassion for others. The college staff and governors celebrate and publicise success in many forms, and they are very proud of their pupils. Loreto College supports, and is supported, within a thriving global network of Loreto schools, playing a full part in the legacy of Mary Ward and the founding sisters.

Loreto College has some highly effective practice from which other schools may learn. This includes: how to embed vision and values into daily practice and planning; and implementing a curriculum matched well to pupil need and aspiration. The ETI will continue to work with Loreto College in the dissemination of this work.

Loreto College is well placed to take forward the areas for consideration detailed in this report.

5. APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE TERMS

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

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