

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

Strabane Academy, Strabane, County Tyrone

Controlled Grammar, co-educational, selective, 11-18 school
DE Ref No. 241-0311

Report of a Follow-up Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in February 2023



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Fourth follow-up inspection to Strabane Academy, County Tyrone, BT82 8LD (241-0311)

Introduction

The [original inspection](#) of Strabane Academy was carried out in November 2012 when the school's education provision was evaluated as satisfactory and important areas for improvement were identified.

Two follow-up inspections took place in [December 2014](#) and [September 2016](#) and a third follow-up inspection, which was impacted by industrial action short of strike, took place in [March 2018](#).

Inspectors were unable to evaluate the extent to which the important areas for improvement left at the last inspection had been addressed, namely to:

- improve the quality, and extend the pedagogical aspects, of teaching and learning in order to meet the needs of all the pupils;
- be more sharply focused, including using data more effectively, on raising expectations to improve the standards in external examinations, particularly at GCE Advanced level; and
- plan at all levels, including the identification of appropriate monitoring and evaluating strategies, in order that the agreed actions lead to improvement.

Consequently, Strabane Academy remained in the follow-up process.

Following the periods of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Monitoring Visit in December 2021 to help the school reflect on its provision, with a view to being well prepared for the fourth follow-up inspection.

A fourth follow-up inspection was carried out in February 2023 which was also impacted by the action short of strike. Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that, due to industrial action short of strike by the teaching unions, members of the senior leadership team and representation from the board of governors would be engaging with the inspection in relation to the arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

As a result of the industrial action the school was unable to provide a complete inspection evidence base to demonstrate the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. The ETI has a [statutory duty](#) to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education being provided for children and young people. The follow-up inspection proceeded on a partial basis as outlined above and the key findings are based on evidence made available at the time of the inspection visit.

Key actions and changes

In the interim period since the previous follow-up inspection in March 2018, the school received external support provided by the Education Authority (EA) in relation to:

- strategic leadership, including governance;
- development planning and action planning at senior and middle leadership levels;
- curriculum planning and development; and
- monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching to improve consistency in the quality of the pupils' learning experiences.

Views of pupils, parents/carers and staff

As a result of the industrial action short of strike, the online questionnaires were not distributed to the pupils, parents/carers and staff. Therefore, it is not possible to report on the views of the pupils, parents/carers and staff. The ETI will re-issue the questionnaires at the time of the next inspection visit to complete this follow-up inspection.

Key findings in relation to Safeguarding

Inspectors were unable to evaluate the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. The following findings are based on the evidence available at the time of the follow-up inspection as set out above.

Due to the partial nature of the evidence base, the ETI is unable to evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. In discussion with the inspectors, the pupils report that they value the positive relationships they have with their teachers, the support they receive in their learning and that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. The pupils report that they would like more opportunities to contribute more fully and be consulted upon relevant aspects of the life and work of the school.

Conclusion

The school's fourth follow-up inspection is incomplete due to the action short of strike of the teaching unions. The ETI has not been able to evaluate the school's progress in effecting the required improvements in the quality of its education provision for a period of over six years since the second follow-up inspection.

As the school did not provide sufficient evidence to evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding pupils, the Department of Education will write to the Education Authority and the Board of Governors to seek assurance on the efficacy of the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

The areas for improvement remain as the need to:

- improve the quality and extend the pedagogical aspects of teaching and learning in order to meet the needs of all the pupils;
- be more sharply focused, including using data more effectively, on raising expectations to improve the standards in external examinations, particularly at GCE Advanced level; and
- plan at all levels, including the identification of appropriate monitoring and evaluating strategies, in order that the agreed actions lead to improvement.

The District Inspector will continue to monitor the school's progress, and the follow-up inspection may be completed at the request of the school up to and including June 2023. Subsequently, the inspection will be completed without further notice.

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