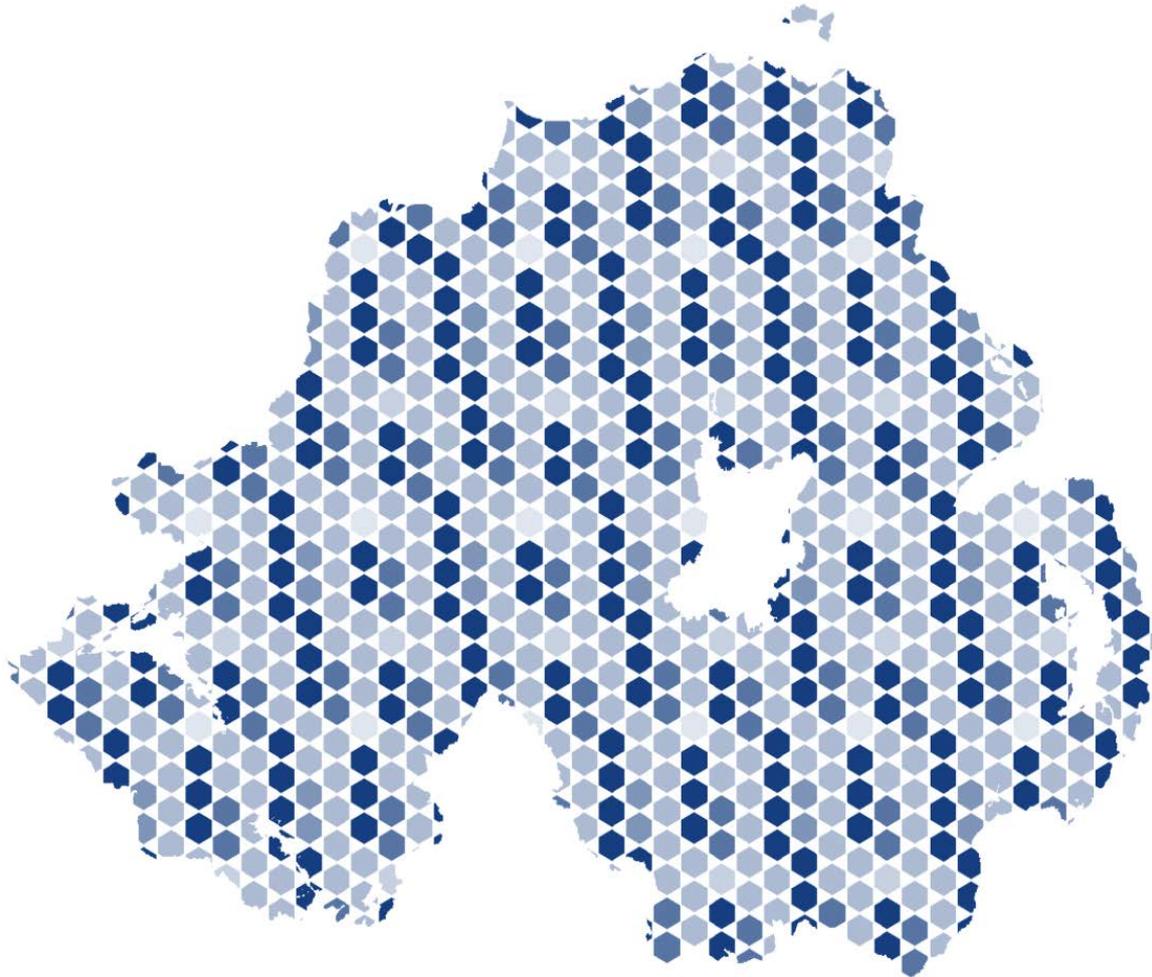


Education and Training Inspectorate POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Carrickfergus Academy, Carrickfergus, County Antrim

Controlled, co-educational, non-selective 11-18 DE Ref No: 321-0323

Report of a Baseline Monitoring Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in October 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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Introduction

The aim of the Baseline Monitoring Inspection is to evaluate the extent to which the leadership and management uses self-evaluation effectively to inform the development planning process to bring about improvement. The outcome of the inspection will inform future inspection activity.

Carrickfergus Academy opened in September 2018 as a result of a joint development proposal to cease provision at Downshire High School and Carrickfergus College, with the purpose of establishing a new co-educational, non-selective controlled post-primary school in Carrickfergus. The school currently operates on two sites, with Key Stage (KS) 3 on the Downshire Road junior campus and KS 4 and KS5 on the North Road senior campus.

The trade unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute and also workload and other management issues. The industrial action includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that none of the teachers would be co-operating with the inspection. Members of the senior leadership and representatives of the board of governors co-operated with the inspection in relation to safeguarding responsibilities. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the standards of education and professional practice among teachers under Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Therefore, the inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

Views of pupils, parents and staff

A confidential, online questionnaire was issued to pupils, parents and staff in advance of the inspection visit. The ETI also met with non-teaching staff on request.

Three percent of the pupils completed a confidential online questionnaire; most of these were pupils in Key Stage 4 and post-16. Overall, most acknowledged the opportunities for extra-curricular activities, that when needed, they can get help with their work and that teachers let them know how to improve their work. Of those pupils that responded, one-quarter provided written comments, including about the learning environment.

Five percent of parents and twelve percent of staff responded to the online questionnaire. Overall, most of the parents who responded indicated that the school has informed them of how to report a complaint, safeguarding issue or other concern. All of the staff who responded indicated that they have participated in staff training and are aware of the school's procedure relating to child protection and safeguarding.

A majority of parents who responded provided written comments. While acknowledging the challenges for staff in relation to resources and travelling between campuses, they expressed concern about the amalgamation process being rushed, with no plans in place for a single school site. They expressed concerns about a number of matters, including: arrangements for shared teaching of classes; the consistency of behaviour management and expectations for pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs; and the cost of travel with the restructuring of the school week. Just over one-half of the staff who responded provided written comments.

The findings, including the issues arising and the particular workplace matters raised by the non-teaching staff, have been shared with the senior leadership and the chair of the Board of Governors.

Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on evaluating action to promote improvement and its impact on learning and teaching and outcomes for learners. However owing to the school's participation in action short of strike, no line of inquiry was selected from the development plan priorities. The school provided evidence of provision for safeguarding as part of the inspection.

As well as the opportunity for all pupils, parents and staff to complete a confidential, online questionnaire, the arrangements for this inspection included: formal discussions with groups of pupils across the key stages on the school's Downshire Road junior campus and the school's North Road senior campus; meetings with members of the senior leadership, non-teaching staff and representatives of the Board of Governors; and review of documentation in relation to safeguarding.

Key findings

- The inspectors met with pupils across the key stages. The younger pupils spoke positively about the support they receive from their teachers. A minority of the pupils expressed concern about the management of behaviour. Some of the older pupils spoke about how lunchtime arrangements have been improved in this school year. They also spoke positively about their leadership roles within the school and how their subject choices have been informed by enjoyment of and previous success in these subjects.
- The provision for all pupils, including interventions and strategies such as withdrawal from class to address barriers to learning, needs to be monitored robustly to ensure that it impacts effectively on the pupils' learning and progress.
- Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate a line of inquiry or the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. Appropriate priority is given to the development and ratification of policies that guide the work of the school. In discussions with inspectors, the pupils reported that they feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the staff, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the pupils. The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.

Health and safety/accommodation

- The school has identified a number of Health and safety/accommodation matters which are being progressed by the relevant stakeholders.

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