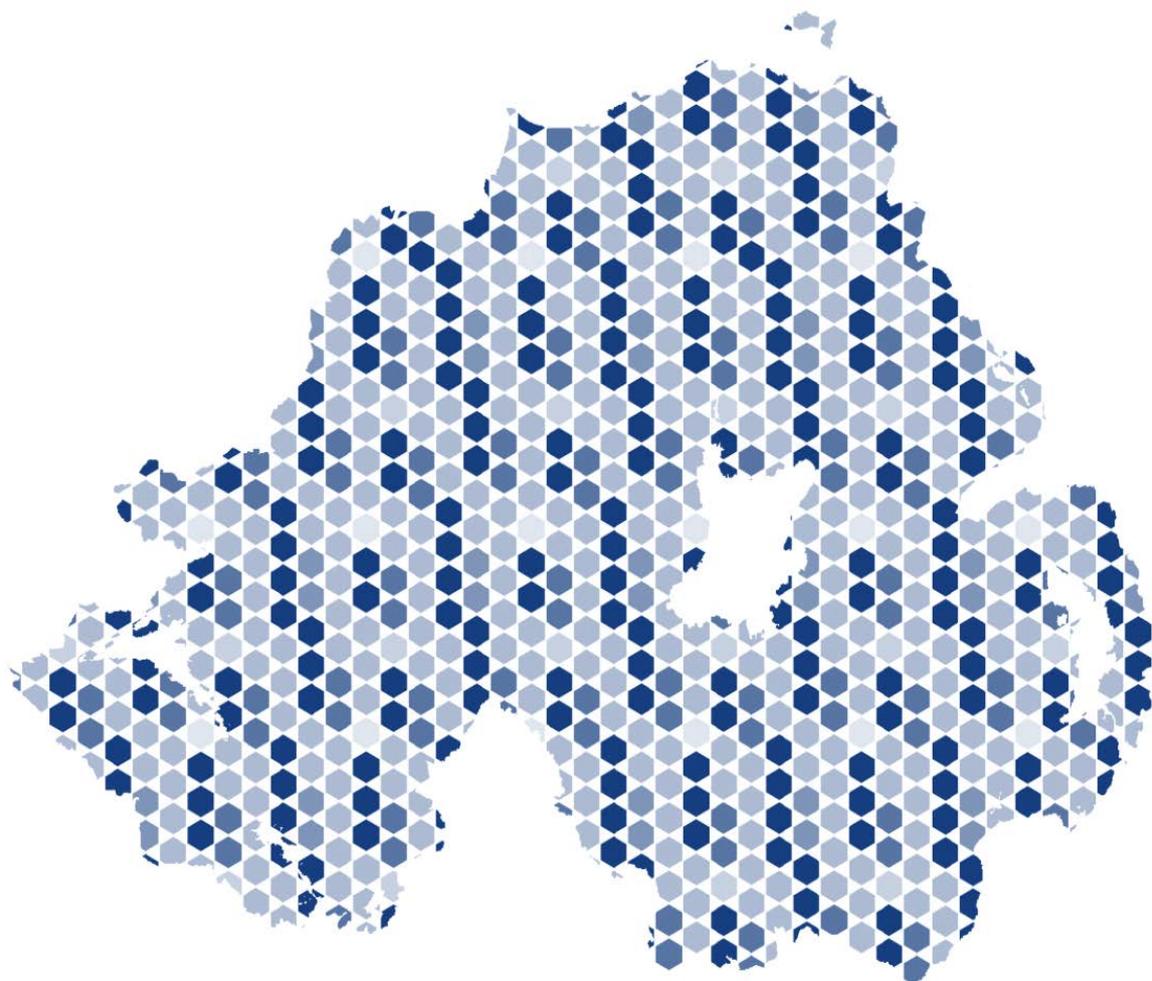


Education and Training Inspectorate

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Conor's College, Kilrea and Clady, County Derry

Maintained, non-selective, co-educational 11-18 school DE Ref No: 323-0318

Report of a Baseline Monitoring Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in January 2020



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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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.

St Conor's College was opened in September 2018 as a result of a joint development proposal to cease provision at St Mary's College, Clady, and St Paul's College, Kilrea, with the purpose of an amalgamation of the two schools to establish a new Catholic, 11-18, co-educational post-primary school. The current enrolment is 566, including post-16 provision which has increased from 51 pupils initially to 67 at the point of inspection. The school currently operates on two sites located approximately seven miles apart, with Key Stage (KS) 3 pupils on the junior site at Kilrea and KS4 and post-16 pupils on the senior site at Clady. To support the increased number of pupils on both sites, new modular classrooms were recently added to the school's accommodation. The school is an active member of the Magherafelt and Rural Learning Partnership (MRLP); through collaboration within MRLP, and with the local college of further education, the school's subject offer meets the entitlement framework, with pupils having access to a wide range of KS4 and post-16 courses.

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. The senior leaders and representatives from the board of governors co-operated with the inspection in relation to their leadership and 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.

Eighty-nine percent of the pupils completed the questionnaire; their responses were very positive. The pupils highlighted their appreciation of the care and support provided, including how teachers let them know how to improve their work, set targets, and develop respect for all people.

Seventeen percent of parents and 98% of staff responded to the questionnaire. Almost all of the parents who responded agreed that the amalgamation has been managed well, and that the school helps their children understand others and develop their personal, social and emotional skills.

All of the staff responding support the school's vision, acknowledge that their own professional learning is linked closely to school priorities and agree that pupils are prepared well for the future, particularly for the next stage of their learning.

All of the questionnaire responses, together with issues arising from the written comments were shared with the principal and representatives of the board of governors. These issues included: the distance and time taken to travel between the two sites; matters relating to the school accommodation and facilities; and a small number of individual concerns.

Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on evaluating action to promote improvement and its impact on learning and teaching and outcomes for learners. During the inspection, two lines of inquiry were selected from the development plan priorities; the school was asked to demonstrate if and how the actions taken have led to improvement for the pupils. The school also 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; and, meetings with the senior leaders and representatives from the board of governors. In addition, the school development plan (SDP) and other documentation provided was reviewed.

The lines of inquiry during the inspection were the school's actions to:

- establish a clear vision, culture and ethos for Saint Conor's College; and
- provide a teacher professional learning programme in order to establish shared expectations for learning, teaching and outcomes for pupils.

Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking and impact of the identified actions associated with the lines of inquiry.

Key findings

- Following extensive and well-conceived consultation, the school has established a clear vision, culture and ethos based on the mission statement of '*Living, Learning, Excelling Together*'. The leadership has fostered an ethos of mutual respect and high expectations. In discussion with groups of pupils, they report that they appreciate the curricular opportunities within and beyond the classroom which help create a sense of belonging within the school community. They recognise that they develop leadership and teamwork skills through participation in, for example, the school council and junior and senior leadership teams.
- The school's teacher professional learning programme is closely linked to the priorities agreed in the SDP. There has been a significant focus on developing the teachers' capacity to use quantitative and qualitative data and to reflect upon the effectiveness of their planning and teaching and the impact on the pupils' learning. In addition, staff participate in external leadership initiatives to inform their evaluation of their areas of curricular and pastoral responsibility. The school has prioritised further development of the opportunities to share and embed effective practice across the school.
- The ETI was unable to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff continue to plan for, and manage, issues related to the development of a sustainable post-16 provision in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. 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. In discussion with inspectors, the children report that they feel safe in school and online, and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the teachers, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

Health and safety/accommodation

During inspection, the following health and safety/accommodation matter was observed:

- unsecured access to parts of the school building and mobile classrooms.

The school needs to take mitigating action.

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