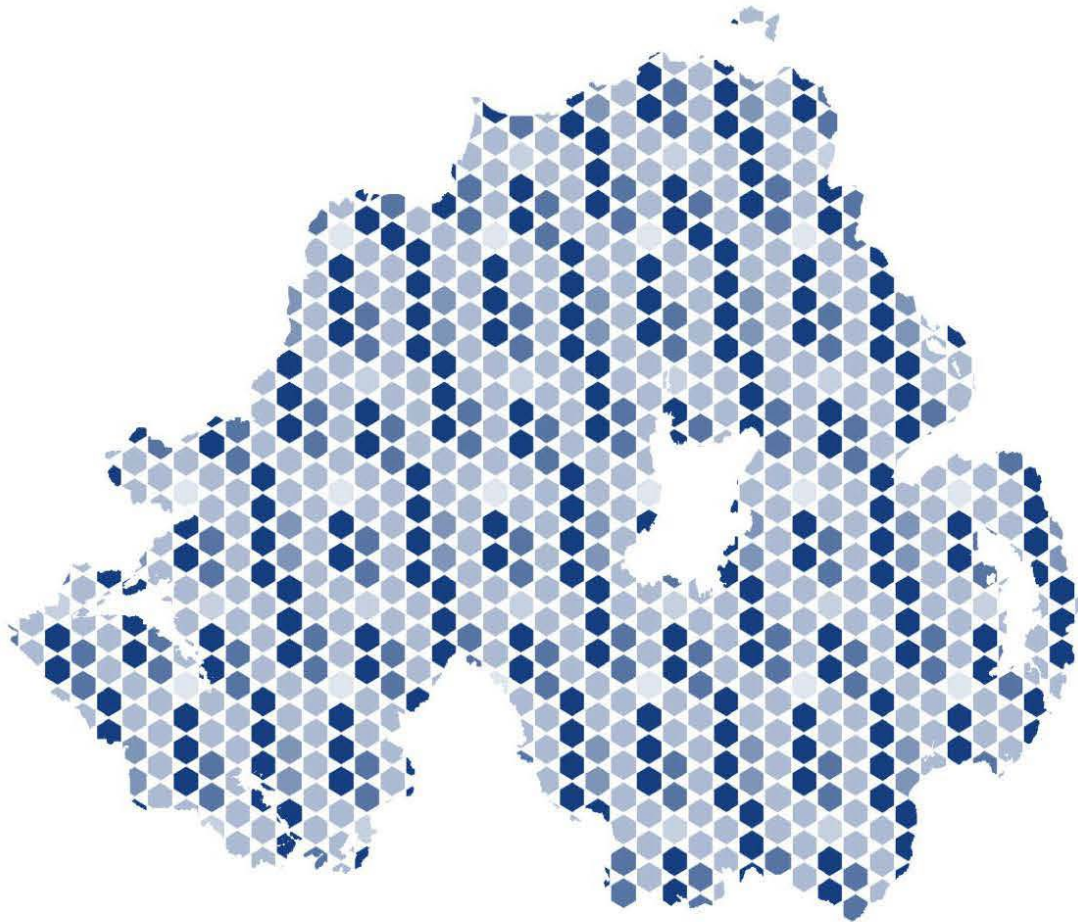


Education and Training Inspectorate POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel, County Down

Voluntary grammar, co-educational, 11-19 DE Ref No: 542-0045

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



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.

In September 2018, St Louis Grammar School welcomed the former pupils of St Columban's College as a result of the development proposals to discontinue provision at St Columban's College and increase admissions and enrolment in St Louis Grammar School. A bid for a major rebuild has been made; meanwhile to support the increased enrolment, which has risen from 564 to 699 pupils, new modular classrooms were added to the school and aspects of the accommodation were refurbished. A Learning Resource Centre has been established, staffed by a specialist teacher, to provide support for pupils with additional social, behavioural and learning needs. The school is an active member of the Newry and Mourne Area Learning Community and has a well-established shared education partnership with the local controlled post-primary school.

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 leadership and governors co-operated with the inspection in relation to 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.

Seventy percent of the pupils completed the questionnaire; their responses were largely positive and the pupils highlighted their appreciation of the care and support provided, including the setting of targets to improve their learning and outcomes.

Around nine percent of parents and 42% of staff responded to the questionnaire. Nearly all of the parents who responded agreed that: the school offers an appropriate range of subjects; their child's learning experiences are impacting positively on their confidence and self-esteem; and their child enjoys learning at the school.

All of the staff respondents agreed that the care, dignity, and well-being of all members of the school community is promoted, that they had participated in staff training for, and are aware of, the school's child protection and safeguarding procedures.

All of the questionnaires responses, together with issues arising from the written comments were shared with the principal and representatives of the board of the governors. These issues included: matters relating to school accommodation and facilities; the pace with which the development proposal was implemented; and, a 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; meetings with the senior leadership and representatives from the board of governors. In addition, the school development plan and other documentation provided was reviewed.

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

- build the capacity of the staff to address the pupils' individual needs; and
- use data more effectively to inform learning and teaching and track the pupils' progress.

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

- The governors and the senior leadership team are embracing the expansion of the school and are fully committed to embedding the school's vision, '*Ut sint unum*' (that they may be one) through fostering a welcoming, inclusive and cohesive school community. The pupils who met with the inspectors spoke enthusiastically about the school's warm, friendly ethos. They appreciate the supportive and helpful staff and value the range of subjects available to them and the opportunities for participating in cultural and sporting activities. The senior pupils have well-formed career aspirations and speak with maturity and confidence.
- Following the recent appointment of a special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinator, pupils, parents and staff were consulted in order to review all aspects of the provision and inform the SEN action-plan. The specialist SEN staff have attended a wide range of relevant training courses provided by external agencies. Subsequently, they have led staff development sessions to build the capacity of all staff to meet more effectively the pupils' individual needs.

- To complement the provision within its recently established Learning Resource Centre, and as a result of recent training by the occupational therapy service, the school has created a fully equipped exercise room to support the pupils' physical development and, importantly, their readiness to learn.
- The format of the individual education plans has been adjusted to include a smaller number of measurable targets which will enable the pupils, parents and staff to assess accurately, and celebrate, progress in learning.
- Significant work has been undertaken to develop further the school's use of assessment data and pastoral information, including through a bespoke programme of professional learning. Detailed information on every pupil is provided to all staff; with a view to enhancing learning, teaching and pastoral support. The progress of each pupil is monitored regularly across the subject areas and interventions are put in place, as and when, appropriate. Through surveys and focus groups, the senior leaders are reviewing how the data is being used to benefit the pupils.
- The ETI was unable to evaluate 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. 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 discussions with the inspectors, the pupils reported that they feel safe and secure, and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

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 pupils. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

APPENDIX

Health and safety/accommodation

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

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