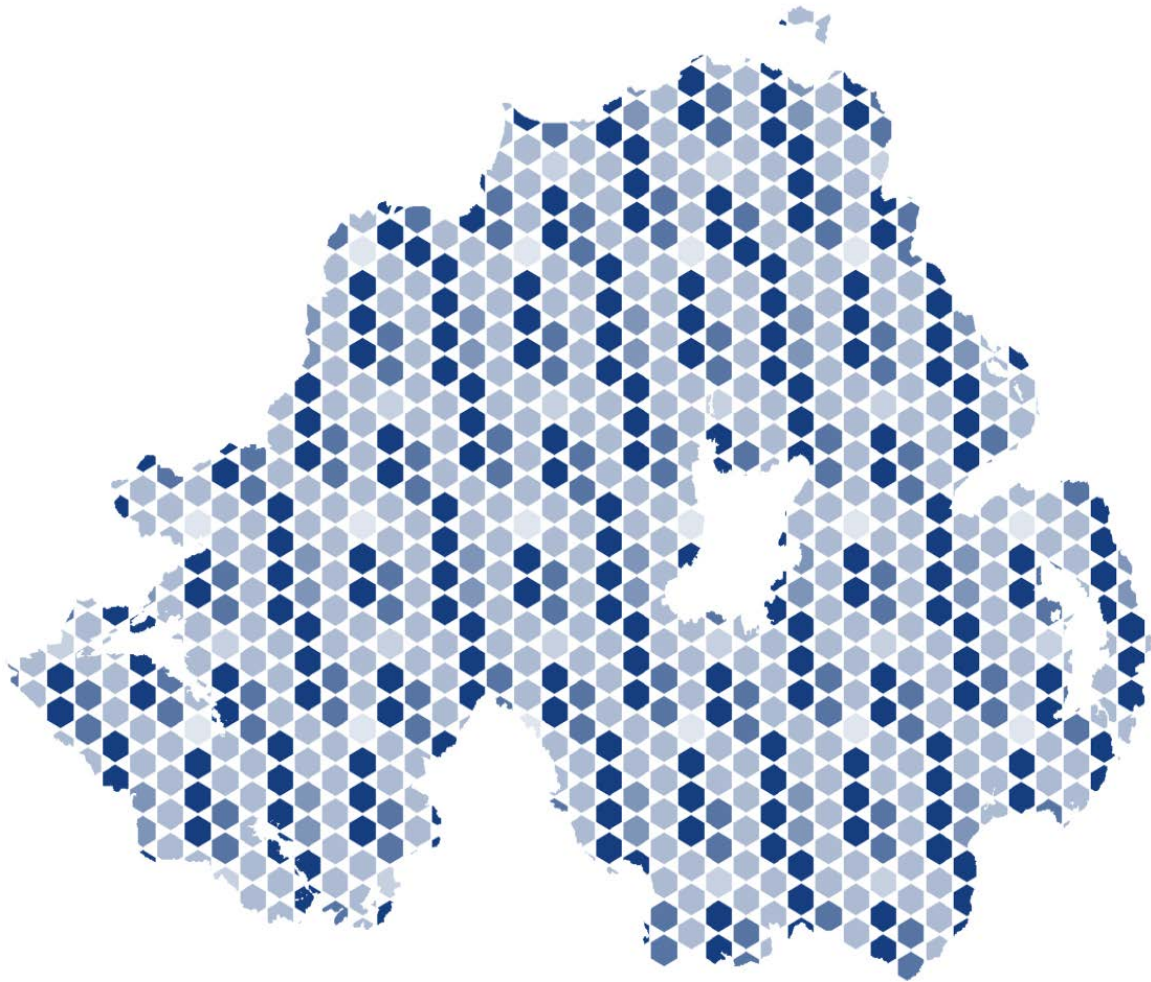


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Coleraine Grammar School,
County Londonderry

Voluntary, selective, co-educational 11-19 school

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
(Involving Action Short of Strike) in
September 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF COLERAINE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, COUNTY LONDONDERRY, BT51 3LA (342-0317)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of Coleraine Grammar School in November 2016¹ which concluded that the school needed to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The area for improvement identified in the inspection was the need to raise the standards the pupils attain, particularly through:

- improving the consistency in the quality of all aspects of learning and teaching;
- improving the out-workings of monitoring and evaluation, including the action planning and use of data, so that it impacts positively on pupil experiences and outcomes; and
- improving the quality of communication across the school.

During the inspection the quality of the provision in English, mathematics and careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) were evaluated as having important areas for improvement.

The school's post-inspection action plans identified key actions to bring about the necessary improvements and were adjusted appropriately in light of feedback given by the ETI. The progress being made in the areas for improvement was discussed with the school in an interim follow-up inspection visit (IFUV) carried out by the ETI on 5 February 2018. The IFUV was impacted by action short of strike. A follow-up inspection was carried out in September 2018.

In the interval since the initial inspection the school received support from the Education Authority (EA) on action planning for middle leaders.

Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute. This includes non-co-operation with the ETI. Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that nearly all of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspection. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education under Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Therefore, the follow-up inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

In the interval since the inspection in November 2016, the actions or changes which affect the work of the school include:

- the number of pupils attending the school has decreased from 1373 pupils to 1154, in line with the area based plan for the re-organisation of the legacy schools (Coleraine Academical Institution and Coleraine High School);
- the number of teachers as measured by full-time equivalents (FTE) has reduced from 81.6 to 72.5, in line with the planned re-organisation;

¹ https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/post-primary-inspection-coleraine-grammar-school-county-londonderry-342-0317_0.pdf

- a staff well-being group is in operation;
- one of the vice-principals retired in August 2018;
- a careers administrator to support CEIAG has been appointed;
- the school has broadened its curriculum to offer a small number of vocational courses;
- there have been some appointments in a temporary capacity, to cover a career break, for the co-ordination of literacy, special educational needs and shared education;
- the school obtained external support in developing a communication strategy; and
- a Governors' learning and teaching sub-committee and a working group to oversee staff well-being are in operation.

Views of parents and staff

As a result of the action short of strike, the re-issued online questionnaire information was not distributed to parents and staff. Therefore it is not possible to report on the views of parents and staff.

Key Findings

The outcomes for pupils attaining seven or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics have remained broadly the same over the last two years; while most pupils attain at this standard, the outcomes are below the average for similar selective schools and the school needs to close the gap. The school is able to demonstrate that it adds value to pupil attainment across the ability range based on data it holds on its pupils, together with pertinent pastoral information. The school continues to work in a focused way on closing the gap between the outcomes of boy and girls, where the girls perform notably better.

The outcomes for pupils who are identified as having special educational needs have improved notably. Attainment at seven or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics has increased from thirty-four percent of these pupils, at the time of the original inspection, to sixty-one percent attaining at this level in September 2018.

The school has focused well on raising standards and pupil outcomes at GCSE at grades A*-B; 17 of the 30 subjects have improved since the original inspection. There are a number of subjects that have not improved and the school is monitoring the provision in these areas in order to make improvements. The overall proportion of pupils attaining 7 or more GCSEs at A*-B has improved from 42% to 48.5% in 2018.

Good improvement in pupil outcomes has taken place in GCSE English at grades A*-B, which has increased by around ten percentage points since 2016. The outcomes in GCSE mathematics at grades A*-B remain below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools. In GCE A level mathematics, outcomes have improved at grades A*-C by ten percentage points since the original inspection and are now slightly above the NI average for similar schools.

Outcomes at GCE A level saw a notable improvement in 2017 where 81% of pupils attained 3 or more GCE A levels at grades A*-C, which is just above the average for similar selective schools. The school is committed to raising outcomes at this benchmark, however the 2018 outcomes dipped to just under 70% attaining at this standard.

The quality of aspects of the work of senior leadership shows improvement since the original inspection through a greater clarity of roles, more transparent accountability and a focus on working towards securing more positive learning experiences and outcomes for the pupils. A clear focus has been placed on knowing the pupils better and there is appropriate use of a good range of performance data and pastoral information to track and monitor the progress of individual pupils and to intervene as appropriate.

There is ongoing development of strategies to address issues around communication and staff well-being and the leadership is using self-evaluation to monitor progress in these areas. The senior leadership team is committed to providing ongoing, well-targeted professional development opportunities for staff.

A group of representatives of the board of governors discussed the actions the school has taken, and the progress it has made since the original inspection, in relation to pupil outcomes, learning and teaching and staff welfare. The governors are very well-informed about, and highly involved in, the improvements that the school is making.

The school has enhanced significantly the provision for CEIAG by providing a very good range of opportunities for pupils to participate in careers conventions, workshops, bespoke lessons, mock interviews and work shadowing. A key strength is the involvement of parents and wider stakeholders in supporting this provision.

Two groups of pupils spoke with inspectors about their experiences in school, their leadership opportunities and their experiences in shared education. The pupils were positive about their experiences, praised the extra-curricular provision and valued highly their shared education experiences.

Owing to action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact of actions taken and the extent to which the following areas for improvement have been addressed:

- improving the consistency in the quality of all aspects of learning and teaching;
- improving the out-workings of monitoring and evaluation, including the action planning and use of data, so that it impacts positively on pupil experiences and outcomes; and
- improving the quality of communication across the school.

Consequently, there remains a need for Coleraine Grammar School to address important areas for improvement.²

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by almost all of 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.

² The Department of Education will seek assurance from the Education Authority/employing authority that they are working with the school in relation to the inspection report.

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