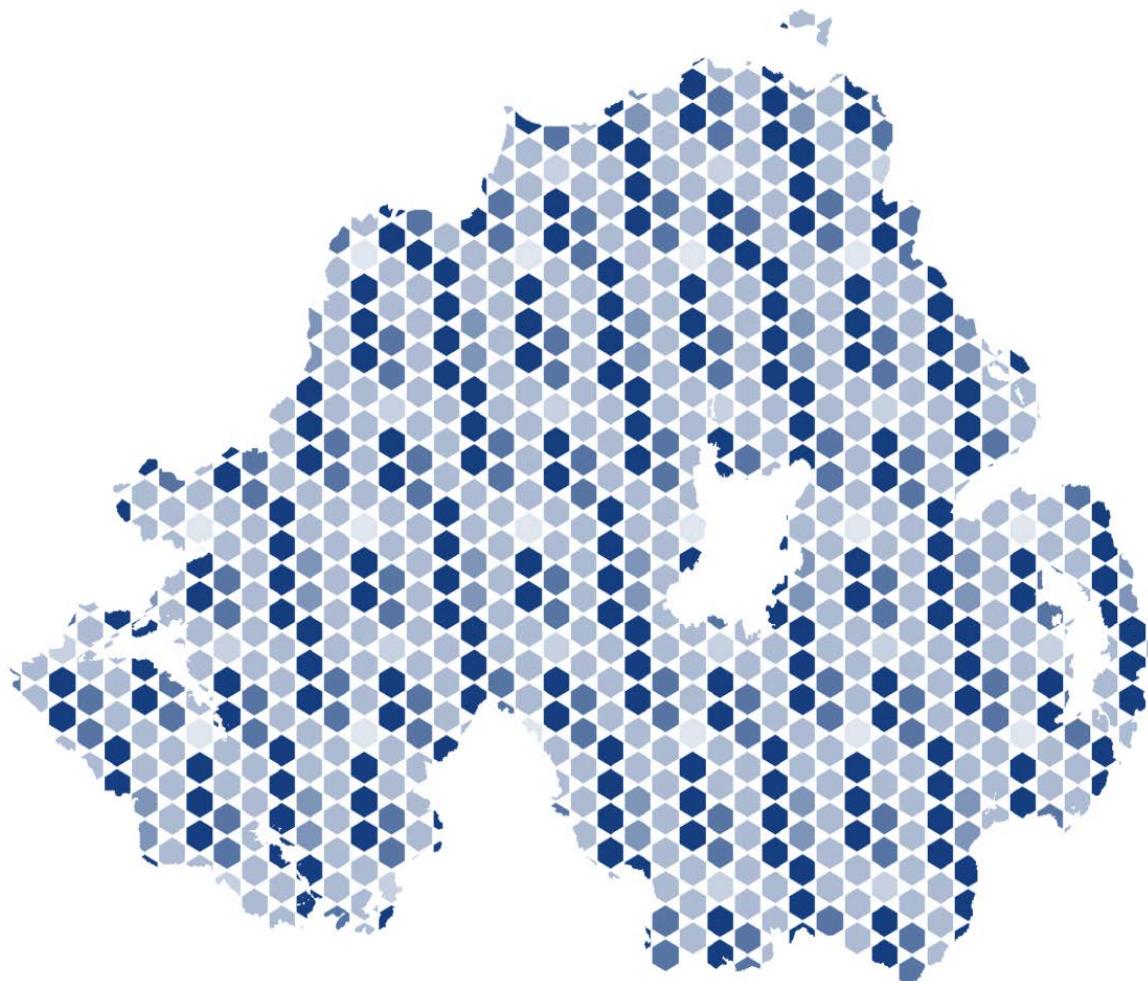


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Wellington College, Belfast

Co-educational, 11-18, controlled, selective school

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
(Involving Action Short of Strike)
in October 2017

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF WELLINGTON COLLEGE, BELFAST, BT7 3HE (141-0270)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of Wellington College in September 2015¹ which concluded that the school needed to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection were the need to:

- raise the standards achieved by the pupils, particularly the levels of attainment in public examinations;
- improve the quality of planning, teaching and assessment in order to promote more successful learning;
- improve the quality of the strategic leadership of the school at a senior level, including governance; and
- build the capacity of all staff to self-evaluate robustly all aspects of provision.

As a consequence, in November 2015, the Department of Education entered the school into the Formal Intervention Process under the Every School a Good School policy².

The school's post-inspection action plans were of a good quality and outlined a number of key actions to take forward the improvement work. The school reports that it received a good level of support from the Education Authority.

The ETI carried out an interim follow-up inspection visit in March 2017.

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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that none of the teachers, except those on the senior leadership team, would be co-operating with the inspectors. 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 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 initial inspection, the following actions or changes which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- a new principal was appointed in January 2017;
- the senior leadership team has been re-structured, with subsequent revisions of roles and responsibilities;
- there has been a reduction in the school enrolment from 789 to 742, whereas the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals has increased to 23%;

¹ The inspection report can be accessed at: <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/post-primary-inspection-wellington-college-belfast>

² <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/ESAGS%20Policy%20for%20School%20Improvement%20%20Final%20Version%2005-05-2009.pdf>

- a school development plan is in place which is now compliant and has been produced in consultation with all members of the school community; and
- the re-constituted board of governors has established a sub-committee to monitor, review and evaluate the post inspection improvement work being undertaken by the school.

Views of parents and staff

Four percent of parents (24) and 14% of staff responded to the online questionnaire. Most of the parents agreed that the school is led and managed well, and almost all of them agreed that they are happy with their child's experiences at the school. The written responses from the parents commented in particular on the high level of care shown to the pupils by the staff. The small number of issues raised in the questionnaires in relation to communication between the school and parents, and the quality of the support provided to pupils with additional learning needs, was discussed (maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents) with the governors and principal.

Key findings

The senior leadership team has worked collegially and with a shared vision to establish more robust processes of self-evaluation at all levels.

At senior and middle leadership level, there are more robust systems at key stage (KS) 4 for target-setting and monitoring pupil progress. The school is developing a range of intervention strategies to support those pupils at risk of under-achieving. Work is underway, appropriately, to extend these systems into KS 3.

The teachers have engaged in teacher professional learning to support improvement in pedagogical awareness and proficiency in classroom practice. This professional development is underpinned by a wide range of evidence-based research and informed appropriately by the pupil voice.

Since the last inspection, the percentage of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE examinations or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has increased and is now in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools. There has been an improvement in the outcomes attained by the pupils at GCSE grades A* to B in most of the individual subjects. There remains, however, too much variation in the performance of the individual subjects at GCSE grades A* to B.

There is a significant variation in the uptake and the outcomes attained by the pupils across the sciences in public examinations at KS 4 and post-16; consequently the provision for science remains a high priority for further improvement.

Over the past two years, the outcomes attained by the pupils in GCSE maths at grades A* to B have improved.

The outcomes for pupils attaining three or more GCE A levels or equivalent at grades A* to C has decreased by five percentage points to 61.5%; this is now significantly below the NI average. The outcomes attained by the pupils in GCE AS and A2 level examinations level remain a high priority for further improvement.

In discussions with inspectors, the pupils were confident in their interactions with each other, spoke with pride and loyalty about their school and are positively disposed to learning.

Owing to action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate the following areas for improvement, namely the need to:

- raise the standards achieved by the pupils, particularly the levels of attainment in public examinations;
- improve the quality of planning, teaching and assessment in order to promote more successful learning;
- improve the quality of the strategic leadership of the school at a senior level, including governance; and
- build the capacity of all staff to self-evaluate robustly all aspects of provision.

Consequently, there remains a need for Wellington College to address urgently the significant areas for improvement.

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.

Further action will be considered by the Department of Education.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2018

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk