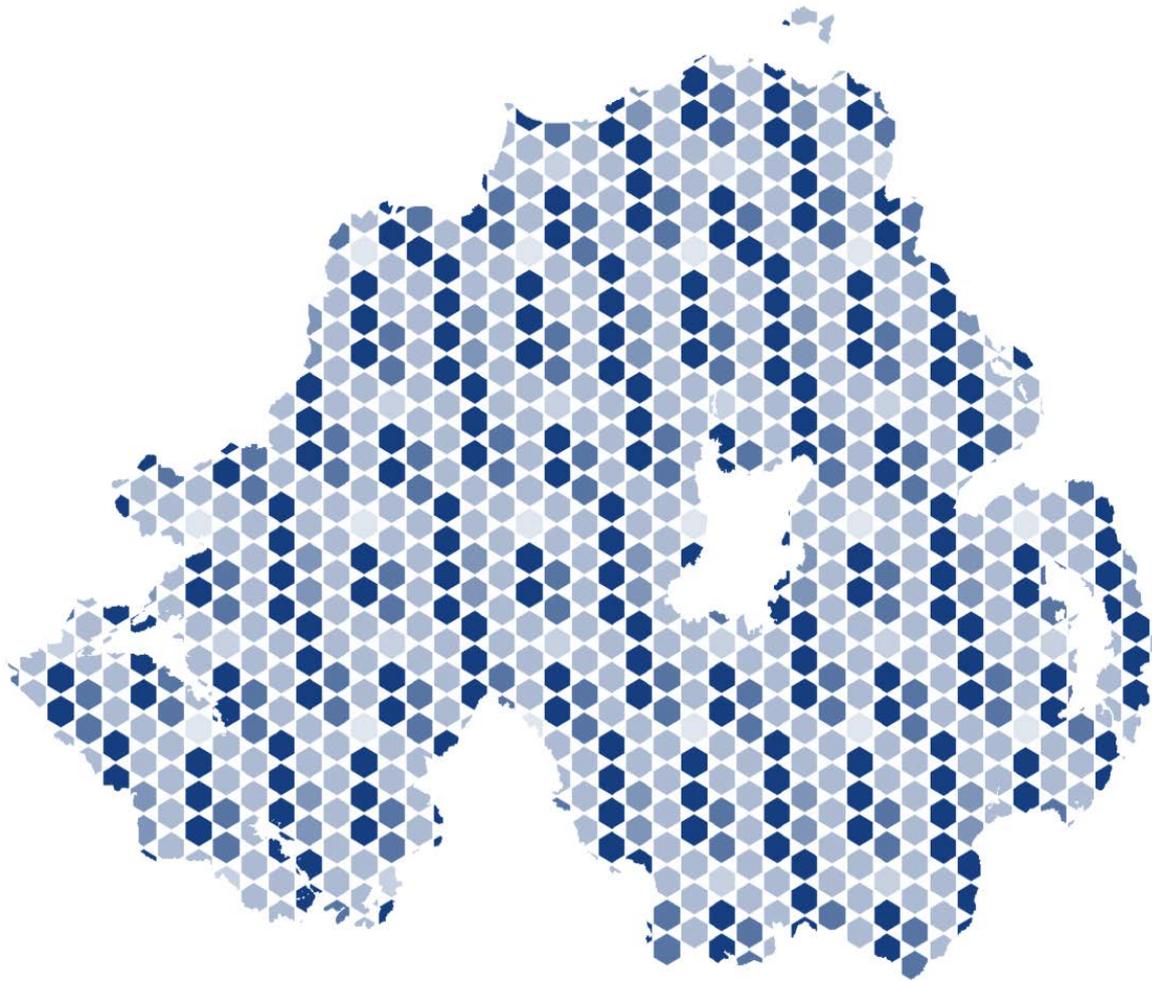


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballyclare High School,
County Antrim

Controlled, selective, co-educational 11-19 school

Report of an Inspection (Involving
Action Short of Strike) in
February 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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1. Context

Ballyclare High School attracts its pupils from around 40 primary schools in a wide catchment area across south and east county Antrim. The school is oversubscribed regularly at entry to year 8 and enrolment in sixth form is steady. There have been notable changes to the structure of the senior leadership team (SLT) in recent years, with a new principal taking up post in September 2015.

The school participates in a range of externally validated improvement initiatives and holds awards such as: Investors in People; the British Council International School Award; and the newly acquired E-safety mark. The school engages in the Ballyclare Learning Community with the other post-primary school in the town. Around 7% of the pupils require additional support with aspects of their learning. Over the last four years, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals has increased from 2% to just under 6%. The school prides itself on its academic traditions and its mission statement envisions, '*Lifelong learning in a caring, creative environment*'.

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 almost all of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. The ETI have 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.

Ballyclare High School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Year 8 Intake	188	187	188	188
Enrolment	1215	1233	1225	1209
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.9% (95.8%)	95.8% (95.6%)	95.8% (N/A)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage ¹	2.14	3.57	4.49	5.96
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	6.09% (74)	6.16% (76)	7.10% (87)	6.87% (83)
No. of pupils with statements of educational need in the mainstream school	7	7	9	9

Source: data as held by the school.

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

Over 9% of parents (91) and 45% of staff (44) responded to the online questionnaires. A majority of the responses to the parental questionnaires indicated good levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. Many of the parents' written comments affirmed, in particular, the care and support provided for the pupils by the school, the helpfulness of staff and indicated good levels of overall contentment. The responses to the staff questionnaires were very positive, emphasising the staff's commitment to the work of the school and highlighting positive working relationships between staff and pupils. There were a number of parental comments around perceived variations in aspects of the quality of learning and teaching and on issues concerning how the school makes decisions and communicates with parents. These issues were discussed with the principal and governors, whilst maintaining the anonymity of the respondents.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, the purpose of a post-primary inspection is to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the pupils;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards; and
- inform the school's planning for improvement.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the quality of the provision and the overall outcomes for the pupils;
- the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards;
- the quality of provision in English and mathematics and science; and
- the quality and impact of the provision for care, welfare and support of the pupils, including special educational needs.

Where it has been possible to evaluate aspects of the foci, they have been reported below.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Effectiveness	Unable to assure the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Provision for learning	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- The pupils, who met with inspectors, were courteous, confident and articulate; they displayed very positive dispositions to the school and spoke well of their teachers and the support they receive with their learning. There are significant levels of pupil participation and achievement in a wide range of sporting, musical and cultural pursuits, which the school offers. As they progress, the pupils have a range of opportunities to take on various leadership and mentoring roles, including opportunities to attain accreditation for some of these roles.
- Over the last three years, the percentage of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has fluctuated. In 2016, outcomes attained by the pupils improved from a notable dip in 2015 to almost 90% attaining this benchmark, which is a little below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for selective schools in the same free school meals band. The outcomes attained by the pupils in most of the individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A* to B are in line with or above the corresponding NI subject averages over the last three years.

- The examination outcomes attained by the small number of pupils entitled to free schools meals in five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is in line with the NI average for all selective schools. Most pupils who have additional needs in aspects of their learning achieve seven or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.
- In two of the last three years, the percentage of pupils attaining three or more GCE A levels or equivalent at grades A* to C remains in line with the NI average for similar schools, with a slight dip noted in 2016. Most of the individual subjects are in line with or above their corresponding averages.
- The proportion of pupils progressing to higher education courses in 2016 is in line with the NI average. Over the last two years, most of the year 12 pupils progressed to post-16 provision in the school and nearly all stayed on from year 13 to year 14.
- The leadership acknowledged disappointment in the variation of pupil outcomes in a small number of subjects and in the under-performance of boys, but was able to demonstrate that appropriate remedial action is under way to address these issues. Some early improvements have already been noted.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the standards attained by the pupils in English, mathematics and science;
- the progression in the pupils' learning; and
- the pupils' wider skills and dispositions.

6. Provision for learning

- The pupils reported they have excellent opportunities to engage in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. This extensive and appealing aspect of provision contributes significantly to their wider educational experiences and is valued highly by pupils.
- The curriculum at all key stages is broad and balanced. At key stage 4 and post-16, the curriculum is kept under review to ensure a range of relevant qualifications and career pathways is provided for the pupils. The well-established collaboration with the neighbouring non-selective school has extended the range of subjects available at post-16. The pupils spoke very positively about the timetabled post-16 enrichment programmes.
- The school's links with business, industry, past pupils and further and higher education providers inform and complement the taught provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) which is coherent and well-structured throughout all key stages. The work experience programme is flexible and responsive to the needs of the pupils; a recent development within the CEIAG provision is a pilot work experience programme in year 10. In discussions, the pupils demonstrated a sound knowledge of the career pathways open to them and reported that they are well supported by their teachers in order to make informed subject and career choices.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the impact of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of the guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in promoting successful learning;
- the quality of provision in English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy across the school; and
- the impact of care and welfare on teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils.

7. Leadership and management

- Appropriate consultation processes and a wide range of self-evaluation evidence, including the use of performance data, inform well the school development plan. The plan details a range of well-considered priorities for school improvement. While the associated action plans guide the development work, there are too many of them and should be prioritised by the senior leaders. Going forward into the next school development plan cycle, the pupils would benefit from the out-workings of a streamlined plan that has a more dovetailed pastoral and academic cohesion. The professional development of staff is afforded a high priority in the school and is linked closely to the priorities for whole-school improvement.
- The school has very well-developed systems which help gather and analyse an extensive range of performance data, which is used broadly to track and monitor progress, identify trends and inform planning and accountability checks.
- The SLT has clearly defined strategic roles and have appropriate levels of capacity to carry out their individual responsibilities. The leadership by the SLT is characterised by a collegial ethos and a clear, shared strategic vision for school improvement and distributed leadership. An evolving culture of self-evaluation is leading to well-targeted actions; however, the monitoring and evaluation across the school has undue variation and would benefit from processes that are applied more consistently and systematically across all subjects.
- Important work has been undertaken to embed a meaningful culture of self-evaluation and in-house capacity building, initiated, in part, through the school attaining status as a Specialist School for information and communication technology (ICT).
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are committed to the life and the work of the school and they are supportive of the commitment of all the staff. They are kept well-informed, have a suitably wide skills-set and are proud of the school's traditions. They are developing their expertise in aspects of governance through attendance at training events, which will help them become more adept in their work.

- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding reflect broadly the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. The pupils reported that they feel safe and secure in school. They know what to do and who to talk to if they are concerned 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.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the effectiveness and impact of the senior leadership of the school;
- the effectiveness and impact of middle leadership; and
- the effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement.

8. Overall effectiveness

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.

Examination performance and other statistical data

GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2013-14 to 2015-16

Based on data held by the school in SIMS² and verified with the ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in Ballyclare High School achieving seven or more GCSE examinations and equivalent at grades A* to C and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals band³.

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 7 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	96.7	89.1	93.5
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category	96.8	96.8	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	96.7	80.4	89.7
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category	95.9	96.5	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	98.4	97.8	98.4
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* to C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	100	83.3	83.3

GCE A level examination results at grades A* to C from 2013-14 to 2015-16

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in Ballyclare High School achieving three or more GCE A levels at grades A* to C, compared with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals band.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	98.5	100	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	75.9	75.4	70.5
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category	75.3	76.8	N/A

² SIMS: School Information Management System

³ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

**Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level (over the past three years)
Grades A* - C**

	2013	2014	2015
Number of pupils in Year 12 cohort	182	184	185

Subject	Entries	School Three-year average at A* to B	Northern Ireland Three year average at A* to B
Art & Design	124	92.74	81.3
Biology	463	79.05	78.8
Business Studies	160	58.75	71.1
Chemistry	358	86.31	83.9
Computer Studies	44	77.27	69.6
Design and Technology	89	91.01	69.4
Drama	50	80.00	78.6
English	294	55.10	57.1
English Language	256	78.13	82.3
English Literature	256	88.67	82.3
French	243	62.96	67.9
Geography	332	88.55	77.7
German	315	47.62	66.0
History	259	78.38	78.4
Home Economics	46	95.65	86.5
Child Development	75	69.33	84.5
Information Technology	200	90.50	85.2
Mathematics	550	92.18	76.4
Mathematics Additional	78	96.15	79.9
Mathematics Further	138	89.86	83.3
Media	35	60.00	n/a
Music	47	78.72	87.7
Physics	358	80.17	82.7
Religious Studies	153	79.08	77.6
Spanish	78	66.67	73.6
Sport(PE) Studies	106	77.36	78.6
Manufacturing *	23	56.52	58.1

- indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 year

**Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A level (over the past three years)
Grades A* - C**

Subject	Entries	School Three year average at A* to C	Northern Ireland Three average at A* to C
Art & Design	52	100.00	90.6
Biology	149	87.25	83.3
Business Studies	72	90.28	85.0
Chemistry	103	78.64	86.1
D&T: product design	26	92.31	67.1
English Literature	76	75.00	83.7
French	32	100.00	89.8
Geography	135	88.15	84.6
Health and Social Science	26	100.00	84.3
History	86	90.70	84.9
Home Economics	22	72.73	88.7
Information Technology	65	86.15	79.6
Mathematics	138	89.13	87.7
Physics	59	94.92	80.3
Politics	45	97.78	88.5
Religious Studies	72	95.83	88.7
Accounting(Finance) *	10	80.00	72.5
Drama *	19	89.47	86.3
German *	10	90.00	89.0
ICT (Vocational)*	17	100.00	84.7
Mathematics Further *	5	100.00	93.9
Media Film & TV Studies *	14	100.00	87.2
Music *	16	93.75	86.7
Spanish *	12	75.00	92.4
Sport(PE) Studies *	19	68.42	68.3

* indicates fewer than 20 entries over 3 years

Staying on rate

Based on data held in SIMS by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of the pupils who stay on at Ballyclare High School, from year 12 to year 13 and then from year 13 to year 14, compared with the NI average for selective schools from school census returns to the Department of Education for the most recent year for which data is available.

	NI Average	School
% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	88.5	81.8
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	91.3	92.5

Leavers' destinations

Based on data held by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from Ballyclare High School who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for selective schools.

	NI	School	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	9204	196			
Employment	4.8%	2.6% (5)			
Institute of Further Education	21.5%	22.4% (44)		44	
Institute of Higher Education	69.5%	67.3% (132)			132
Work-based Learning (Training)	1.8%	3.1% (6)			
Unemployed	1.1%	0.5% (1)			
Another school	n/a	4.1% (8)			
Unknown	1.3%	n/a			

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework publication is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ISEF-Post-Primary>.

Inspectors scrutinised documentation, data and held formal discussions with some pupils (in groups), and some staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management⁴:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

⁴ And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

Accommodation

There is significant water damage to the walls and the flooring in one corner of the assembly hall, which was impacting adversely on the use of this space by the pupils and staff.

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