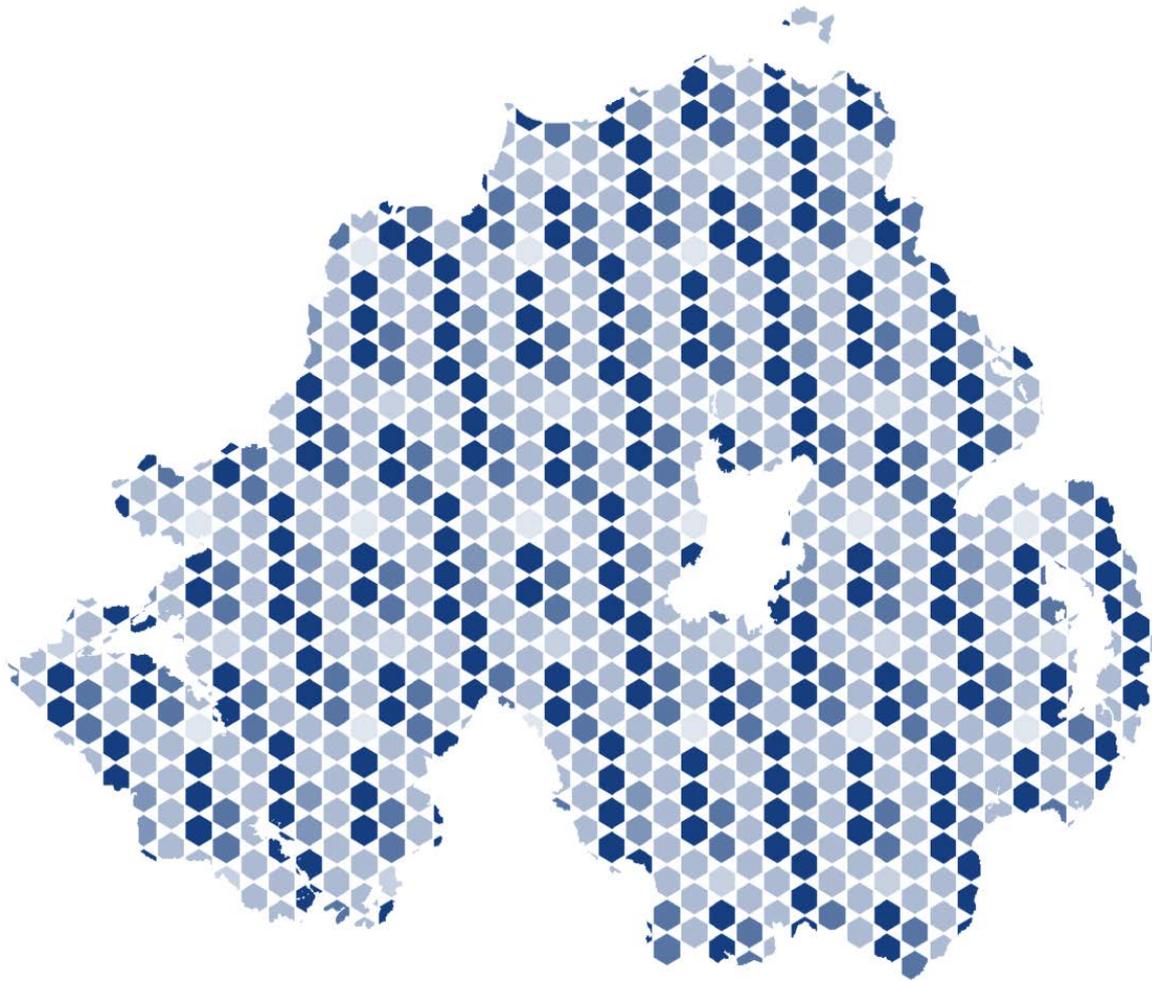


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Dominican College, Belfast

All-girls' voluntary grammar 11-18 school

Report of an Inspection (Involving
Action Short of Strike) in
January 2018



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

Dominican College, Fortwilliam is situated off the Antrim Road in North Belfast. Most of the pupils come from the local area and, increasingly, from across the city and the Greater Belfast areas. Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals has doubled to over one-fifth of the enrolment.

The school is involved in a cross-community musical initiative with a controlled all-girls' school in East Belfast. Pupils have access to a range of leadership opportunities including peer mentoring and external leadership awards.

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-cooperation 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 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.

Dominican College, Belfast	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Year 8 Intake	149	152	148	152
Enrolment	1023	1026	1005	1001
% Attendance (NI Average)	93.2 (95.6)	95.3 (93.5)	95.8 (N/A)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage ¹	10.11	17.01	18.81	22.49
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	8.6 (88)	8.8 (90)	9.3 (93)	9.1 (91)
No. of pupils with statements of educational need in the school	5	7	6	7
No. of newcomers	5	*	*	5

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

Two percent of parents (18) responded to the online questionnaires. Most of the responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. They reported positively on the effective communication between home and school, and their children's enjoyment of school. Eleven percent of staff (13) responded to the online questionnaire; almost all of the responses to the staff questionnaires were positive, stressing the inclusive, welcoming and pastoral ethos of the school. The very few issues raised in the questionnaires were discussed with the principal and governors.

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.

In addition to the focus on English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy, there was a supplementary subject focus on science in this inspection.

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, 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 in the body of the report.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average for selective schools in the same free school meals band.
- The outcomes attained by the pupils in almost one-half of the individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A* to B are more than five percentage points below the corresponding NI subject averages over the past three years. The school has identified this as an important priority for improvement.

- In the past three years, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics is consistently well above the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals band. Those pupils who have additional needs in aspects of their learning are achieving in line with their peers.
- Over the same period, at GCE A level or equivalent, the percentage of pupils attaining at grades A* to C in at least three subjects, is above the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals band. In the past two years this proportion has been well above the corresponding average.
- Whilst almost all of the GCE A level subjects are in line with or above the respective three-year subject average at grades A* to C, with just over one-third well above the average, the proportion of pupils progressing from year 13 to year 14 is lower than the NI average.

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. Quality of Provision

- Over the past three years the percentage of pupils repeating year 13 has increased to just over one-fifth. It will be important for the school to review: its curriculum offer and entry policy to post-16 study; and, the delivery of the curriculum at key stage (KS) 4 to ensure that pupils have the skills required to meet the demands of their chosen courses at post-16.
- In discussions with the inspectors, the pupils expressed their appreciation of: the friendly and inclusive school environment; the support and guidance provided by their teachers; and the range of leadership opportunities available to them, in particular, at post-16. A small number of pupils reported some concerns about less effective learning and teaching and its impact on subject 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 or overall impact of the careers education, information, advice and guidance provision;

- the quality of provision in English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy and science across the school; and
- the impact of care and welfare on teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils.

7. Leadership and management

- The school development plan identifies clear and appropriate priorities for school improvement. Although informed through consultation with key stakeholders, the improvement planning process lacks challenging analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data available in the school. A particular focus of the improvement work should include the pupils' evaluation of the effectiveness of their learning.
- At middle leadership level, the action plans do not inform sufficiently the school's strategic improvement work. It will be important for leadership, at all levels, to identify and agree clear, specific actions, with measurable and time-bound targets, related to learning and teaching and the raising of standards at all key stages.
- 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 use their collective expertise and experience to support the school to achieve the targets included in the school development plan. It is important that they are clearly focused on developing further the appropriateness of the pupils' learning experiences and the outcomes they achieve.

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. 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 are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

9. 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 2014-15 to 2016-17

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 Dominican College 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.

The table also includes the percentage of year 12 pupils in Dominican College achieving seven or more GCSE examinations and equivalent, including English and mathematics at grades A* to B. In this instance, there is no NI average available.

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 7 subjects	99.3	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	95.3	95.8	93.4
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁴</i>	<i>94.1</i>	<i>95.3</i>	<i>N/A</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	95.3	95.8	93.4
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>91.0</i>	<i>93.9</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades B or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	64.4	61.1	54.7
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	100	100	99.3
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	96.2	100

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'.

⁴ The benchmarking bands for 2015/16, as set in in Circular 2017/8 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting' are different to those used in preceding years; therefore, trend comparisons with previous years' benchmarking data need to be treated with caution.

GCE A level examination results at grades A* to C from 2014-15 to 2016-17

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 Dominican College achieving three or more GCE A levels or equivalent 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	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	99.1	100	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	83.8	87.6	87.6
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁵</i>	<i>75.8</i>	<i>76.1</i>	<i>N/A</i>

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

	2014	2015	2016
Number of pupils in Year 12 cohort	149	144	137

GCSE Subject or equivalent	Number of entries	School A* to B %	NI A* to B %
English Language	430	82.6	89
English Literature	430	73.5	89
Mathematics	430	71.6	78
Religious Studies	424	82.1	87
Science Double Award	229	83.6	79
Geography	180	73.3	84
Spanish	161	82.0	81
Information Technology	143	91.6	92
Science Single Award	143	87.4	75
Art & Design	131	74.8	83
Mathematics Further	130	78.5	88
Health & Social Care	121	49.6	69
History	121	77.7	82
French	111	63.1	74
Irish	72	81.9	81
Business Studies	71	62.0	78
Music	61	95.1	90
Sport/PE Studies	54	51.9	82
Design and Technology	36	83.3	88
Biology	31	96.8	85
Chemistry	31	100.0	87
Physics	31	93.5	88
Preparation For Work / PSE	31	74.2	83
Home Economics*	20	55.0	88
Italian*	12	100.0	N/A

* indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

⁵ The benchmarking bands for 2015/16, as set in in Circular 2017/8 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting' are different to those used in preceding years; therefore, trend comparisons with previous years' benchmarking data need to be treated with caution.

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

	2014	2015	2016
Number of pupils in Year 14 cohort	111	121	112

GCE Subject or equivalent	Number of entries	School A* to C %	NI A* to C %
Sociology	111	92.8	74.9
English Literature	88	89.8	86.2
Mathematics	77	96.1	90.8
Religious Studies	74	97.3	90.0
Health & Social Care	67	98.5	85.5
History	64	92.2	88.6
Biology	54	96.3	83.9
Chemistry	53	92.5	85.9
Art & Design	44	100	93.0
Geography	41	95.1	89.6
Business (Voc)	37	100	87.2
Information Technology	36	86.1	84.7
Drama	35	100	90.3
Politics	35	100	89.2
Business Studies	32	90.6	88.9
IT/Art	22	95.5	93.1
Physics	21	81.0	87.8
Spanish	21	100	93.0
Music*	18	100	84.3
Sports Studies*	16	100	N/A
Media Film and TV Studies*	15	100	89.2
Irish*	13	100	95.1
French*	12	100	88.2
Design and Technology*	9	100	92.9
Art & Design Critical Studies*	3	100	N/A

* 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 Dominican College, from year 12 to year 13 and then from year 13 to year 14, compared with the NI average for selective schools, based upon information 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	86.3	86.2
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	87.2	79.6

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 Dominican College who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for selective schools.

	School	NI	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	150	9750			
Employment	4.0%	509 (5.2%)			
Further Education	16.6%	2083 (21.4%)	0	25	0
Higher Education	76.6%	6706 (68.8%)	0	0	115
Work-based Learning (Training)	0.0%	221 (2.3%)			
Unemployed	2.0%	95 (1.0%)			
Unknown	0.0%	136 (1.4%)			

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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

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.

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