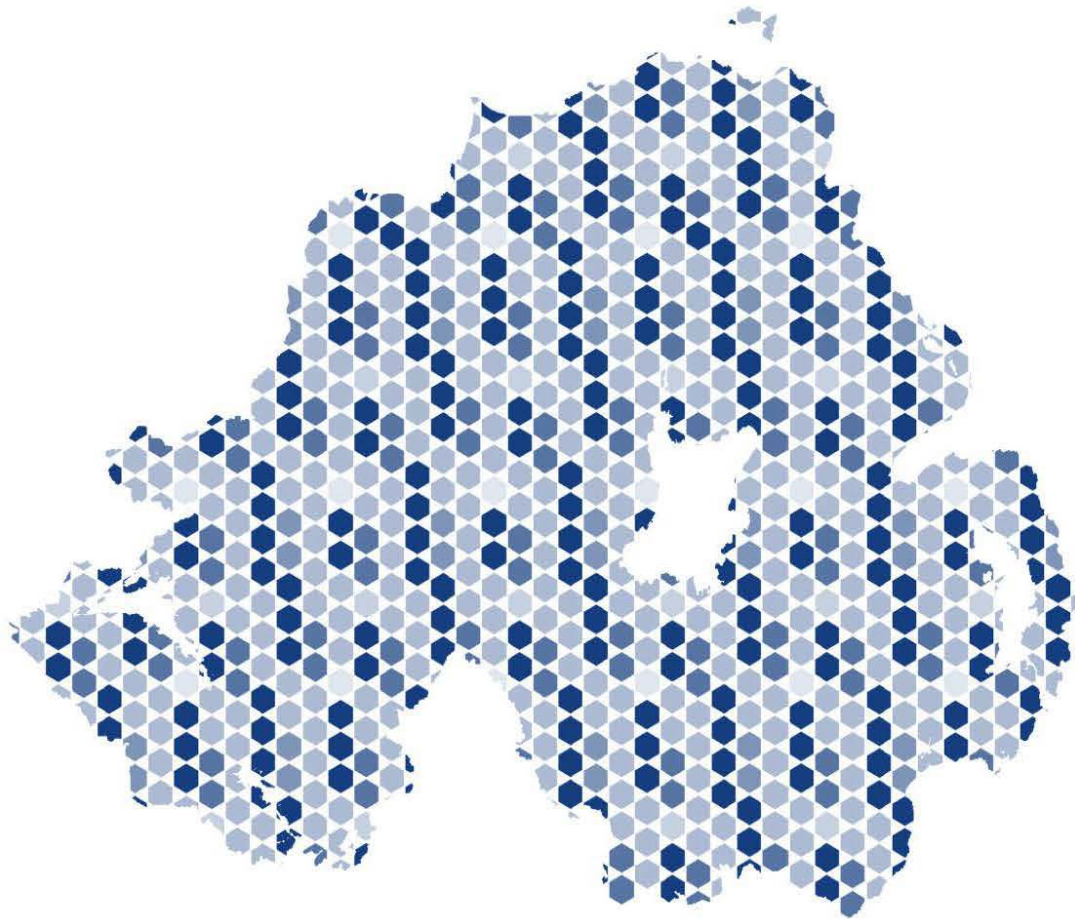# Education and Training Inspectorate
POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

Larne Grammar School, Larne, County Antrim

11-18 co-educational voluntary grammar school   DE Ref No: 342-0046

Report of an Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in November 2019

CONTENTS

1.   Context

Larne Grammar School draws the majority of its pupils from the town and the surrounding townlands, with increasing numbers coming from further afield. The school is consistently oversubscribed at year 8. There have been significant changes in senior and wider leadership, including a restructuring of roles and responsibilities to align with the priorities in the school development plan. The school participates in a shared education partnership with three other schools in the locality.

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 representatives of the board of 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.

Larne Grammar School	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Year 8 Intake	111		115		110		110	
Total Enrolment	740		743		741		738	
Attendance (NI Average*)		96.1 (95.5)		95.5 (95)		95.7 -		N/A -
Free School Meal Entitlement	111	15.00%	116	15.61%	111	14.98%	103	13.96%
Pupils on SEN Register	37	5.00%	42	5.65%	58	7.83%	49	6.64%
No of Pupils with Statements	*		8		6		5	
No of Newcomer Pupils	*		0		0		0	

Northern Ireland Statistic & Research Agency: Attendance at grant-aided primary, post-primary and special schools: Detailed Statistics - 2016/17, 2017/18
N/A: Not available.
* Fewer than 5.

2.   Pupils', parents' and staff questionnaire responses

Forty percent of the pupils completed the online questionnaire. Overall, a majority of the responses were positive about their experience in the school, with the pupils appreciating, for example, the support and guidance that they receive with their work and the range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to them. Nearly two-fifths of the pupils responding provided written comments; most of these written comments raised concerns about aspects of accommodation and inconsistency in their learning experiences, including how behaviour is managed and the implementation of the anti-bullying policy.

Nine percent of parents and 37% of staff responded to the online questionnaire. The responses to the parental questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. The written comments affirmed, in particular, the positive learning environment provided for the pupils, the well-managed transition from primary school into year 8 and the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available. The parents are supportive of the work and commitment of the staff. The responses to the staff questionnaires were almost all positive, highlighting the school's caring approach and the good opportunities available for the staff to develop further their professional expertise.

The concerns which were raised through the questionnaires were discussed with the principal and the representatives from the board of governors.

3.   Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the learners;

- 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 modern languages 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 and literacy, mathematics and numeracy, and modern languages; and

- the quality and impact of the provision for care, welfare and support of the pupils.

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

5. Outcomes for learners

- The pupils engaged respectfully with the inspectors and expressed their views maturely. The senior pupils report they are developing leadership skills through, for example, membership of the prefect team, school council and leading mentoring programmes.

- Over the past three years, while the proportion of pupils attaining seven or more GCSEs (including equivalents) at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has fluctuated, the outcomes in each year are in line with the school's internal target setting process for individual pupils and whole school outcomes. The attainment of the pupils entitled to free school meals has been consistently above the corresponding Northern Ireland (NI) average for the last three years.

- The outcomes attained by the pupils in most of the individual subjects at GCSE at grades A* to B are in line with or above the corresponding NI subject averages (in those subjects for which there are corresponding NI subject averages) for 2017 to 2018, with one-quarter being well above (with the changes to GCSE grading, the 2019 outcomes at grades A* to B cannot be compared with previous years). The proportion of pupils attaining top grades is a notable strength.

- Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils attaining three or more GCE A level qualifications (including equivalents) at grades A* to C has been in line with or above the NI average (for schools in the same Free School Meals band). A significant strength is that all of the subjects at A level are performing in line with, or above, the corresponding subject averages (in those subjects for which there are corresponding NI subject averages) over the past three years, with almost one-third being well above.

- In 2019, the gap has widened between boys and girls in the standards attained at GCSE and post-16, with the girls outperforming the boys. While the school has focused effectively on raising overall outcomes at GCSE and A level, it will be important for the school to keep this differential in performance under review.

- A notable strength is the pupils' participation and success in a wide range of cultural, musical and sporting activities.

- Most of the year 12 pupils return to post-16 study at the school. Almost all of those who leave progress to level 3 courses in further education or training. The school leavers' destinations data indicates that most year 14 pupils in 2018 progressed to higher education courses.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the standards attained by the pupils in English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy and modern languages;

- the progression in the pupils' learning; and

- the pupils' wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- In discussions with the inspectors, the junior pupils spoke positively about how the range of extra-curricular opportunities broadens their experience outside the classroom. The pupils talked about the range of ways their teachers helped them improve their work.

- The school offers a broad and balanced range of subjects which meets the statutory requirements of the Entitlement Framework. At post-16 a small number of pupils study courses offered in collaboration with the nearest college of further education. Recent strategic changes to the curriculum have taken place with introduction at post-16 of several applied and vocational subjects to meet more effectively the needs and careers aspirations of all of the pupils. The senior leaders and governors are monitoring appropriately and exploring alternative ways to provide access to subjects where uptake is particularly low, notably at post-16.

- The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is delivered through the employability strand of the Learning for Life and Work scheme at key stage three and a discretely programmed period of careers in year 12 and in post-16. The senior pupils receive personal careers guidance in the key transition years which contributes to their subject and career choices. In discussions with the inspectors and through questionnaire responses, a small number of pupils in key stage 4 reported that they would value further careers guidance in making subject choices for the next stage of their education. The pupils in sixth form have opportunities for work experience placements. The further development of careers education, information, advice and guidance provision is a strategic priority within the school development plan.

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 and assessment in promoting 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 modern languages across the school; and,

- the impact of care and welfare on teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team has a clear and strategic vision for the school which is centred on improving further in the learning experiences provided for the pupils and the outcomes they achieve. Distributed leadership and capacity building have been central to progressing school development. The whole-school approach to developing learning and teaching has been informed by research, an audit of professional skills, peer-to-peer lesson observations and dissemination of practice. It will be important to measure the impact of this work, in particular, through consultation with pupils.

- School improvement planning is informed by consultation with all stakeholders; clear priorities focused on the identified needs of the school guide clearly the improvement agenda. There is regular monitoring of targets using a wide range of evaluation processes with subsequent reporting to governors and staff. In order to assess more accurately the impact of the improvement work, the evaluations need to be better informed by baseline data and include quantifiable measures.

- 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 actively engaged in, and well informed about, the life and work of the school through direct communication and interaction with teachers and pupils. They have a very good understanding of their role in reviewing all aspects of provision, exercising their challenge function and making decisions about how best to progress school development in the interest of the learners.

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 (DE). The school is reviewing currently aspects of its child protection, safeguarding and pastoral policies to reflect more fully the current DE guidance and contemporary issues which affect the pupils. 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.

Health and safety/accommodation

The school has identified a health and safety/accommodation matter which is being progressed by the relevant stakeholders. However during the inspection the following health and safety matter was observed:

- Pupils crossing the main road separating the two sites without due supervision.

The school is taking mitigating action.

Examination performance and other statistical data

Data Year 12 performance

GCSE and GCSE Equivalent Subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE and Equivalents in at least 7 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	93.4	98.18	90.83
The NI average for grammar schools in the same FSM band	93.7	92.9	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	93.4	97.27	90.83
The NI average for grammar schools in the same FSM band	93.4	92.8	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	99.06	100	95.41
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to FSM achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A - C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	100	100	88.2

* Median for each year from the Department of Education benchmarking Quartiles for grammar schools in the same FSM band.
BENCHMARKING DATA GCSE & Level 3 Post-primary Schools 2016/17
BENCHMARKING DATA GCSE & Level 3 Post-primary Schools 2017/18

Year 12 GCSE (including equivalent) examination outcomes

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of pupils in Year 12 cohort	106	110	109

(The three average is expressed as a percentage of the pupils entered)

Subject	Number of Entries over two years (2017/18)	School Two-year average A* to B	Northern Ireland Two-year average A* to B	Number of Entries in 2019	School 2019 A* to B^
Art & Design (GCSE/FC_3510)	40	92.5	76.0	34	91.2
Business Communication Systems (GCSE/FC_7460)	0	-	-	18	27.8
Business Studies (GCSE/FC_3210)	107	86.9	69.1	53	75.5
Design and Technology (GCSE/FC_8900)	71	69.0	73.5	31	61.3
English Language (GCSE/FC_5030)	216	84.7	80.4	109	80.7
English Literature (GCSE/FC_5110)	71	78.9	79.4	21	90.5
French (GCSE/FC_5650)	30	66.7	64.3	14	92.9
Geography (GCSE/FC_3910)	126	58.7	73.4	54	63.0
German (GCSE/FC_5670)	*	100.0	60.3	0	-
History (GCSE/FC_4010)	66	65.2	76.8	40	60.0
Home Economics (GCSE/FC_3310)	47	89.4	83.4	20	90.0
Home Economics: Child Development (GCSE/FC_3330)	33	87.9	74.7	21	100.0
Information Technology (GCSE/FC_2650)	216	99.1	80.1	91	90.1
Learning for Life & Work (GCSE/FC_0021)	33	66.7	70.0	18	61.1
Mathematics (GCSE/FC_2210)	216	75.5	73.6	109	77.1
Mathematics Further (GCSE/FC_2330)	45	77.8	86.6	21	100.0
Motor Vehicle Studies (GCSE/FC_3070)	0	-	-	14	21.4
Music (GCSE/FC_7010)	25	88.0	87.6	*	100.0
OS Science: Astronomy (COA/B_1690)	*	100.0	N/A	*	75.0%
Religious Studies GCSE/FC_4610)	39	82.1	79.3	46	78.3
Science Double Award (GCSE/DA_1370)	183	85.2	72.2	91	81.3
Science Single Award (GCSE/FC_1310)	33	90.9	62.5	18	88.9
Self Development (NQF/L2_HB1)	*	100.0	N/A	0	-
Spanish (GCSE/FC_5750)	87	72.4	70.5	36	66.7
Sport/PE Studies (GCSE/FC_7210)	67	59.7	44.0	28	60.7

* Indicates fewer than 10 entries.
^ With the 2019 changes to GCSE grading, the outcomes at grades A* to B cannot be compared with previous years.

Data Year 14 performance

GCE A Level or equivalent	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Percentage of Year 14 taking A levels and Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	100	100	99
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A levels	83.33	85.54	83.33
*The NI average for grammar schools in the same FSM band**	80.0	74.5	N/A

* Median for each year from the Department of Education benchmarking Quartiles for grammar schools in the same FSM band.
BENCHMARKING DATA GCSE & Level 3 Post-primary Schools 2016/17
BENCHMARKING DATA GCSE & Level 3 Post-primary Schools 2017/18

Year 14 A-level (including equivalent) examination outcomes

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of pupils in Year 14 cohort	91	83	91

(The three average is expressed as a percentage of the pupils entered)

Subject	Number of Entries over three years	School Three-year average A* to C	Northern Ireland Three-average A* to C
Applied Science (GCE/A_RA1B)	21	90.5	N/A
Art & Design (GCE/A_3510)	16	100.0	93.7
Biology (GCE/A_1010)	106	93.4	82.9
Business Studies (GCE/A_3210)	57	98.2	89.1
Chemistry (GCE/A_1110)	42	95.2	88.8
Computer Studies/Computing (GCE/A_2610)	7	100.0	84.8
Design and Technology (GCE/A_8900)	24	100.0	N/A
English Literature (GCE/A_5110)	30	96.7	85.5
French (GCE/A_5650)	*	100.0	92.3
Geography (GCE/A_3910)	45	86.7	86.9
Health & Social Care (GCE/A_0003)	38	97.4	89.2
History (GCE/A_4010)	11	81.8	83.6
Home Economics (GCE/A_3310)	10	100.0	N/A
Information Technology (GCE/A_2650)	126	88.1	73.6
Mathematics (GCE/A_2210)	34	97.1	88.8
Music (GCE/A_7010)	*	100.0	85.4
Performing Arts (GCE/A_LC11)	*	100.0	N/A
Performing Arts (Voc) (GCE/A_0015)	12	100.0	84.2

Physics (GCE/A_1210)	*	87.5	79.1
Psychology (GCE/A_4850)	19	68.4	70.6
Religious Studies (GCE/A_4610)	40	95.0	88.3
Science (Voc) (GCE/A_0008)	13	100.0	N/A
Science: Environmental (GCE/A_1750)	47	87.2	N/A
Spanish (GCE/A_5750)	12	100.0	94.3
Sports Studies (BTEC/SD3_MA1)	32	100.0	N/A
Travel & tourism (GCE/A_0017)	15	93.3	80.1
Travel and Tourism (BTEC/SD3_NK1)	11	100.0	N/A

* Indicates fewer than 10 entries over 3 years.

Staying on rate 2018/19**

% Yr12 staying on to Yr13	80.4	NI Av. Year 13	84.7
% Yr13 staying on to Yr14	93.9	NI Av. Year 14	86.9

** Pupils counted for staying on rates for pupils in year 13 in 2018/19 are those that were in the final year of a level 2 qualification in 2017/18 and were in the first year of a level 3 qualification in 2018/19. This figure is divided by the number of pupils in the final year of a level 2 qualification in 2017/18. Pupils that repeat GCSEs are not counted as 'staying on'. Pupils that move schools between years are counted as 'staying on' (this is counted as part of the total of the school where the pupil sat their level 2 qualification). This means that schools without a sixth form have a staying on rate and that if a pupil moves from a non-grammar school to a grammar school they have been included in the figures for non-grammar pupils.

Leavers' Destinations 2017/18

	NI No & %	School No & %	NI Yr12 No & %	School Yr12 No & %	NI Yr13 No & %	School Yr13 No & %	NI Yr14 No & %	School Yr14 No & %	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 and above (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	9760 100%	107 100%	1287 100%	18 100%	640 100%	6 100%	7833 100%	83 100%			
Employment	530 5.4%	5 4.7%	74 5.7%	* *	77 12%	0 0%	379 4.8%	* *			
Institute of Further Education	2066 21.2%	27 25.2%	988 76.8%	16 88.9%	467 73%	6 100%	611 7.8%	5 6.0%		24	
Institute of Higher Education**	6661 68.2%	73 68.2%	* *	0 0%	* *	0 0%	# #	73 88%			73
Training***	320 3.3%	* *	173 13.4%	* *	44 6.9%	0 0%	103 1.3%	* *			
Unemployment	59 0.6%	0 0%	11 0.9%	0 0%	8 1.3%	0 0%	40 0.5%	0 0%			
Others	124 1.3%	0 0%	41 3.2%	0 0%	# #	0 0%	# #	0 0%			

Source for NI data: Destination of School Leavers by year group, 2017/18 GRAMMAR SCHOOLS (excludes special and independent schools).
* Fewer than 5 cases.
# Figures supressed.
** Includes universities and teacher training colleges.
*** Numbers entering training include those entering the Training for Success programme, operated by the Department for the Economy. Training on Training for Success is delivered by a range of training providers, including Further Education Colleges. Training for Success trainees who receive training at Further Education Colleges are recorded as being in training and not in Further Education. This convention avoids double counting of Training for Success trainees.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework publication is available on the ETI website: http://tinyurl.com/ISEF-Post-Primary.

The arrangements for this inspection included: a meeting with representatives from the governors; formal discussions with some pupils (in groups), meetings with the senior leadership; review of documentation and data; and the opportunity for all pupils, parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments	Percentage with comments
Pupil	293	40	112	38
Parent/Guardian	56	9	23	41
Teacher	20	43	16	80
Support staff	9	28	4	44

The tabulated SIMS information (Appendix B) and the tables for Year 12 and Year 14 examination outcomes in individual subjects (Appendix C) have been verified by the school.

GCSE Grading 2019

The Department of Education has indicated there are no plans to change school performance measures at A*-C with the introduction of the new C* grade. For GCSEs graded 9-1 this performance measure will be 9-4. For the ETI, data on performance in public examinations continues to be only one of the measures that contributes to the evaluation of outcomes for learners.

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 management (and the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable):

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

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners
Does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

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.