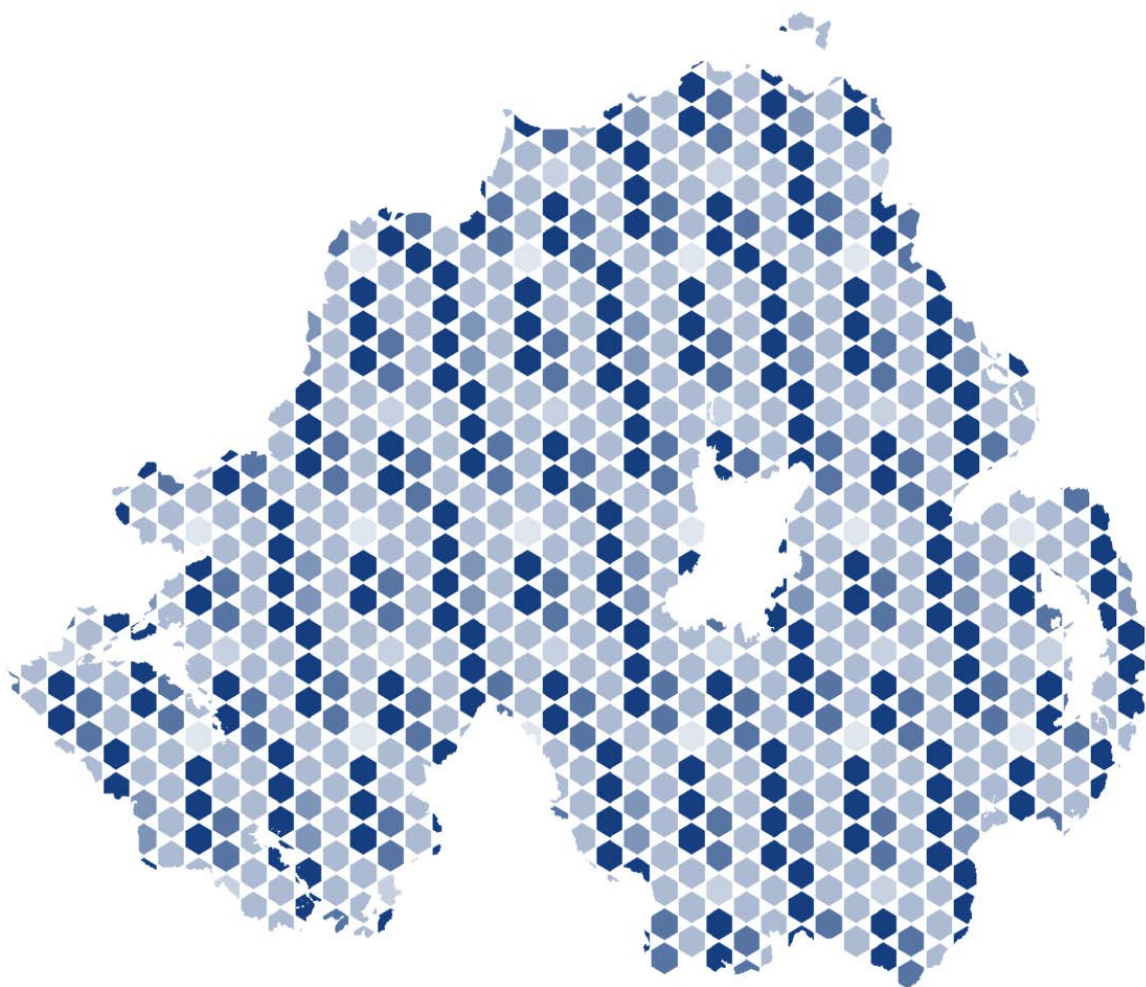


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Rathmore Grammar School,  
Belfast

Voluntary, co-educational selective 11-18 school

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



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## 1. Context

Rathmore Grammar School is situated in the outskirts of Belfast. The pupils are drawn from a wide area which includes South and West Belfast, Lisburn, Crumlin, Moira and the surrounding areas. The school is regularly oversubscribed; since 2015-16, the number of pupils with statements of educational need has nearly doubled.

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 only the senior leadership would 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 inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

Rathmore Grammar School	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Year 8 Intake	186	185	184	193
Enrolment	1276	1269	1270	1280
% Attendance (NI Average)	96.1% (95.5%)	95.9% (95.5%)	95.5% (N/A)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	7.7%	8.6%	9.4%	9.7%
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	17.3% (221)	16.1% (204)	14.7% (187)	14.1% (180)
No. of pupils with statements of educational need in the mainstream school	22	27	30	38
No. of newcomers	0	0	*	*

**Source:** data as verified by the school.

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

## 2. Pupils', parents' and staff questionnaire responses

Twenty-seven pupils, from across the key stages, responded to the online questionnaire. Overall, the responses were positive, with the pupils acknowledging they can get help with their work when required, how the school listens to their views, and, that they know who to go to in school if they are upset, worried or need help. Over two-fifths of the pupils who responded provided written comments, indicating that the school focuses on securing their outcomes and wellbeing.

A small number of parents (23) responded to the online questionnaire and most indicated high levels of support with the life and work of the school. The individual concerns which were raised through the written responses were discussed with the principal and the representatives from the board of governors.

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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 interest 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 history 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 history; 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 who met with inspectors were highly confident, articulate and well-rounded young people; they are well disposed to learning, interact easily and comfortably with others and demonstrate high levels of courtesy and respect.
- The outcomes for the pupils at key stage (KS) 4 and post-16 for pupils, including those with additional learning needs, have been at a consistently high standard.
- Over the past three years, most pupils attain seven or more GCSE qualifications at grades A\* to B including English and mathematics; and almost all pupils attain three or more GCE A levels at grades A\* to C.
- The GCSE outcomes attained by the pupils in almost all of the individual subjects at grades A\* to B are above, or in line with, the corresponding NI subject averages. The pupils' attainment in over two-thirds of the individual subjects are either more than ten percentage points above the corresponding NI average, or 100%.

- Almost all pupils who have a free school meals entitlement achieve seven or more GCSE qualifications at A\* to C.
- The A level outcomes attained by the pupils in all of the individual subjects at grades A\* to C are above, or in line with, the corresponding NI subject averages. Of particular note, the pupils' attainment in almost two-thirds of the individual subjects is more than ten percentage points above the corresponding NI average, or 100%.
- The school's staying on rates are high and most of the pupils progress to higher education, accessing a wide range of courses.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

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

## **6. Quality of provision**

- The curriculum at all key stages is kept under constant review. As a result, the pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum at all key stages which enables them to progress appropriately, as evidenced by the high standards attained in public examinations and the progression pathways secured. Enrichment and leadership opportunities are developed well across the key stages; this is a strength of the curricular and extra-curricular provision.
- There is a taught programme of employability at KS 3 and discreet provision at KS 4 and post-16. This provision is complemented by an extensive programme of events and experiences throughout the year, such as guest speakers, learning guidance forums and events that are age and stage appropriate. Work experience placement opportunities are available to all year 11 and 13 pupils.
- Across the key stages, the pupils who met with the inspection team expressed their appreciation for the high level of individual care and support provided for them through the school's pastoral system. They discussed the very helpful information they receive through the taught pastoral programme complemented by assemblies, visiting speakers and additional events, all of which develop their personal awareness, well-being and resilience. In addition the younger pupils indicated how they valued and benefited from the support of older pupils through the buddy system. A particular strength is the school's arrangements for engaging with the pupils' ideas: the pupils reported that they are enabled to make a meaningful contribution to school life and to the decision-making process including through their input into school policies and initiatives to promote pupil well-being.
- In discussions with the inspectors, the pupils spoke positively about their varied work experience opportunities, the personalised advice provided by careers specialists, and the opportunities to benefit from a broad range of careers events.

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;
- the quality of provision in English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy and history 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 have clear and well defined roles and responsibilities which are aligned closely with the key priorities in the school development plan. They have complementary strengths and work collegially to set out a clear, strategic vision for developing further the key priorities of: learning and teaching, care, welfare and support within the school community and the standards attained by the pupils.
- The school development planning process is informed by: extensive consultation with pupils, parents, staff and governors; a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data; and regular monitoring and evaluation of departmental action plans.
- The staff development programme is linked closely to the whole-school priorities. It has a clear focus on continuous improvement with regular opportunities for all staff to focus on pedagogical practice, build expertise and capacity and disseminate effective learning and teaching strategies.
- The governors are highly committed, well-informed about the life and work of the school. They exercise their challenge function, where appropriate, to support pupil centred high standards and manage the school's resources efficiently. Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.

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. 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 well-being.

## **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 needs to review its risk assessment arrangements for access to the school site and buildings.
- There are no vision panels in the classroom doors in the convent area of the school.
- There is no grill on the pond.



## Examination performance and other statistical data

### GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2015-16 to 2017-18

Based on data held by the school in SIMS<sup>2</sup> and verified with the ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in Rathmore Grammar 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 band<sup>3</sup>.

The table also includes the percentage of year 12 pupils in Rathmore Grammar School 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.

<b>GCSE and GCSE Equivalent Subjects - *following permitted exclusions</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 7 subjects</i>	100	100	98.9
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects</i>	98.9	97.2	97.8
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals band<sup>4</sup></i>	96.0	95.4	N/A
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics</i>	98.9	96.7	97.8
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals band</i>	96.4	94.3	N/A
<i>Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades B or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics</i>	84.4	77.8	80.3
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects</i>	100	98.9	98.9
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* - C or equivalent including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics</i>	100	95.0	100

<sup>2</sup> SIMS: School Information Management System

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

<sup>4</sup> 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 and equivalent examination results at grades A\* to C from 2015-16 to 2017-18

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 Rathmore Grammar School 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	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	100	100	99.4
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 subjects	92.2	91.5	89.0
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals band<sup>5</sup></i>	77.7	79.2	N/A

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

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

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of pupils in Year 12 cohort	179	180	178

GCSE Subject	Number of Entries	School A*-B %	NI A*-B %
Art & Design	96	87.5	78.2
Biology	111	75.7	82.2
Business Studies	71	74.6	69.2
Chemistry	38	97.4	85.3
Computer Studies	99	88.9	70.6
D&T Resistant Materials	133	86.5	64.7
Drama	87	100	81.8
English Language	536	92.9	80.3
English Literature	533	90.8	80
French	197	75.6	65.2
Geography	162	84	73.5
German	69	92.9	62
History	174	83.9	77.4
Home Economics	14	92.9	84.1
Home Economics: Food	56	87.5	N/A
Information Technology	59	74.6	82.4
Irish	69	89.9	77.4
Mathematics	536	93.7	73.2
Mathematics Further	281	87.2	86
Music	45	100	88
Physics	72	83.3	84.4
Religious Studies	536	93.7	79.2
Science Double Award	378	84.3	72.3
Spanish	260	84.2	72.7
Sport/PE Studies	103	86.5	73.9

N/A: Not available

<sup>5</sup> 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**

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

	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>
Number of pupils in Year 14 cohort	167	165	155

<b>GCE A Level Subject or equivalent</b>	<b>Number of Entries</b>	<b>School A*-C %</b>	<b>NI A*-C %</b>
Art & Design	43	100	92.8
Biology	119	97.5	83.1
Business Studies	77	98.7	91.5
Chemistry	89	96.6	88.7
Computer Science	27	96.3	81.3
D&T Product Design	19	94.7	65.9
Design and Technology	30	93.3	88.7
Drama	34	100	89
English Literature	109	95.4	85.1
French	45	95.6	91
Geography	61	98.4	87.8
German	16	100	N/A
Health & Social Care	13	100	86.8
History	64	98.4	85
Home Economics: Food	14	100	N/A
Information Technology	64	93.8	77.5
Irish	21	95.2	95.5
Mathematics	225	94.7	88.9
Mathematics Further	22	95.5	96.5
Media Studies	30	100	84.1
Music	12	100	87.8
Physics	73	90.4	82.6
Politics	28	100	88.4
Religious Studies	138	99.3	88.9
Sociology	52	90.4	76.8
Spanish	45	100	91.3
Sport/PE Studies	26	96.2	77.8

N/A Not available

## Staying on rate<sup>6</sup> 2017/18

Based on data held by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of the pupils who stay on at school compared with the NI average for all schools and for the most recent year for which data is available.

	NI Average	School
% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	85.3	95.1
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	88.0	91.5

## LEAVERS' DESTINATIONS<sup>7</sup> 2016/17

Based on data held by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from this school who leave school to enter employment, further education, higher education, and training or are seeking employment compared with the average for grammar schools and for the most recent year for which data is available.

	NI No.(%)	School No.(%)	NI Yr12 (%)	School Yr12 (%)	NI Yr13 (%)	School Yr13 (%)	NI Yr14 (%)	School Yr14 (%)	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	9727	180		9		*		168			
Employment	445 (4.6%)	10 (5.6%)	4.8%	*	10.7%	*	4.1%	4.2%			
Institute of Further Education	1967 (20.2%)	15 (8.3%)	81.5%	77.7%	76.3%	*	7.2%	3.5%	0	14	*
Institute of Higher Education <sup>8</sup>	6870 (70.6%)	153 (85.0%)	*	0	*	0	86.0%	91.6%	0	0	153
Training <sup>9</sup>	237 (2.4%)	*	9.9%	0	5.6%	0	1.1%	*			
Unemployment	104 (1.1%)	*	1.2%	*	2.6%	0	1.0%	*			
Others	104 (1.1%)	0	#	0	#	0	0.7%	0			

Source for NI data: Destination of School Leavers by year group, 2016/17 - GRAMMAR SCHOOLS<sup>10</sup>

- \* fewer than 5
- # figures suppressed

<sup>6</sup> The percentage of pupils who stay on at school compared with the Northern Ireland average for all schools, this rate is calculated in terms of pupils who progress their level of study, whether at their original or a new school. Pupils that move schools between years are counted as 'staying on' at their original school as they are progressing their study within the school system.

<sup>7</sup> Destination is defined by Institution. Institutions may provide courses at both Further and Higher Education levels.

<sup>8</sup> Includes universities and teacher training colleges.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> Excludes special and independent schools.

### **Inspection methodology and evidence base**

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework publication, which is available at: <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), and some staff with specific responsibilities; review of documentation and data; and the opportunity for all pupils, 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 management<sup>11</sup>:

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

<sup>11</sup> And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

## 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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