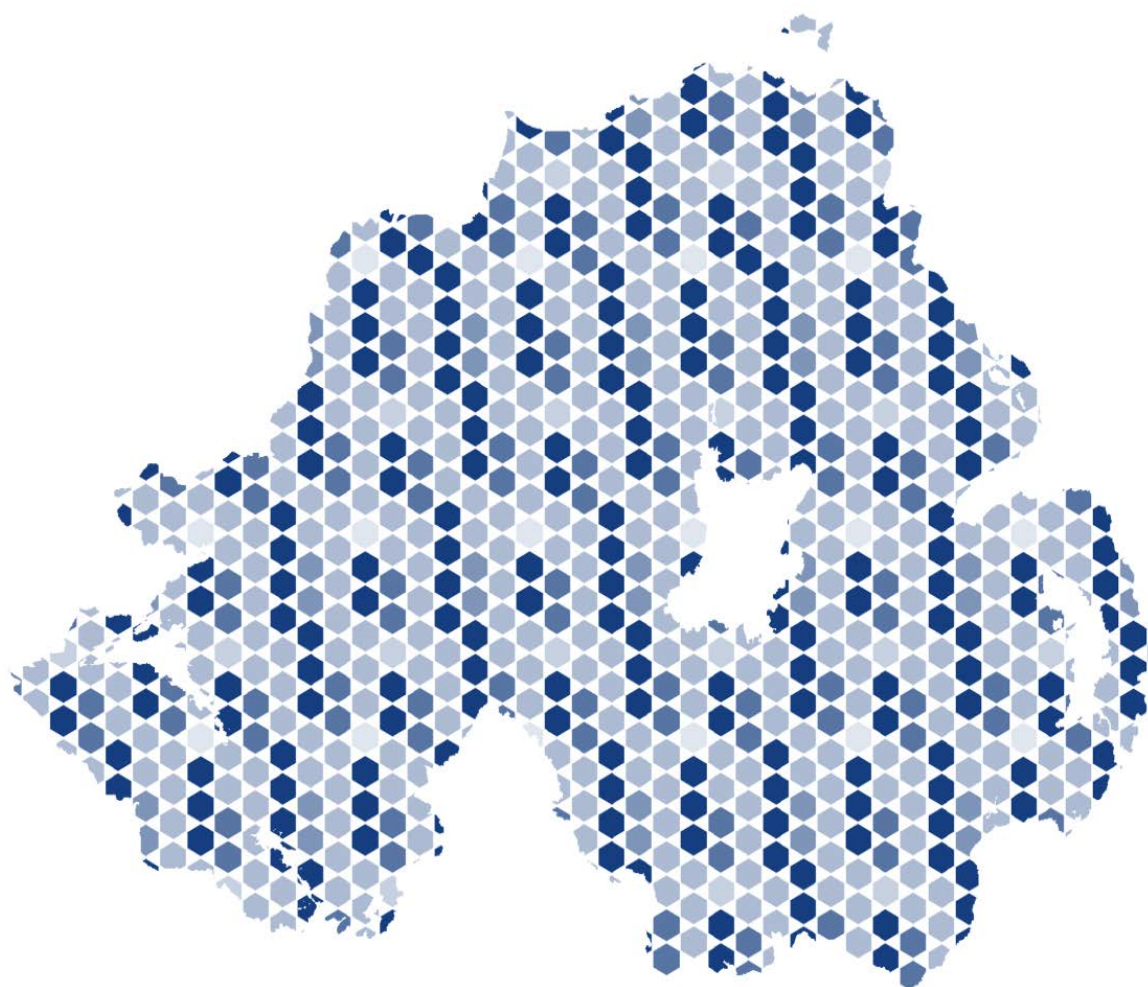


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Columba's College,
Portaferry, County Down

Maintained, co-educational non-selective school

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

St Columba's College is situated in the town of Portaferry, in County Down. The pupils are drawn from the town and the wider County Down area; approximately one-half of the pupils travel to the school by bus. Over the past three years, enrolments to the school have declined. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals has increased from 27% to 31%, and the proportion of pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning has increased from 26% to 34%.

The school provides the pupils with a range of opportunities to become responsible and productive participants in society through: its work as a UNICEF level 2 rights respecting school with leading ambassador status; as a kindness school of the year for two consecutive years; and as a green flag eco school.

The school is involved in a well-established shared programme with two other nearby schools and there are proposals for a shared education campus.

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 teaching staff or the senior leadership team would be co-operating with the inspectors. The governors also refused to co-operate with the inspection team. 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.

St Columba's College	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Year 8 Intake	37	44	29
Enrolment	183	187	176
% Attendance (NI Average)	92.00% (92.5%)	93.03% (N/A)	92.00% (N/A)
FSME Percentage ¹	27.00	30.00	31.00
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	25.68% (47)	31.00% (58)	34.00% (60)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	23	25	22
No. of newcomers	*	*	*

* Fewer than five pupils

2. Views of parents and staff

As part of the non-co-operation with the ETI, the school refused to distribute inspection questionnaires to parents and staff; consequently there were no responses.

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.

As a result of the industrial action by the teachers, 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 the provision in English and mathematics; and
- the quality of the provision for the care, welfare and support of the pupils.

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
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 proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C has increased from 62% to 100%, which is significantly above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools. The attainments by the pupils in most of the subjects at this level are above or in line with the NI average. The school uses a range monitoring strategies to identify and address underperformance and effect improvement.

Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has increased from 45% to 73% which is also significantly above the NI average for similar schools. Over the same period, it is noteworthy that the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals attaining at this level increased from 22% to 83%.

Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C including English and mathematics, and one or more science subject has increased from 38% to 73%.

Over the past three years, there have been no suspensions or expulsions from the school, and the school has worked collaboratively with two other local post-primary schools to create and implement a shared anti-bullying policy.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

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

6. Quality of provision

The school's curriculum offer at key stage (KS) 4 is broad, balanced and responsive to the needs of the pupils. It meets their progression needs well, as evidenced by the improving outcomes attained by the pupils in public examinations, and the progress of almost all of the year 12 leavers to level 3 provision in other schools or further education colleges.

The staff are clearly committed to the school and pupils as evidenced by the very low rate of teacher absenteeism and their support and commitment to the planning and delivery of a range of KS 4 twilight courses to provide support and access for the pupils to a wider curriculum offer.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the impact of the curriculum review on the pupils' learning;
- the effectiveness of the guidance and support (including careers education, information, advice and guidance) in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching and assessment in promoting learning;
- the quality of provision in English, 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

The school development plan guides well the work of the school and there is an appropriate emphasis on whole-school sharing of good practice which is focused appropriately on actions leading to improvement.

At the time of the inspection, the governors refused to co-operate with inspectors; consequently, they did not complete the governance self-evaluation proforma or meet with the inspection team.

It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

8. Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence to demonstrate that the arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to meet with governors, talk to pupils, gain the views of staff and parents through the online questionnaires or observe the pupils' learning experiences in lessons. Consequently, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

CONCLUSION

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

- There is creeping and sporadic woodworm in the gymnasium floor.
- Some repairs to the gymnasium floor have resulted in raised edges which present a trip hazard.
- There is water ingress in the ceiling of the resource centre and year 12 common room.

Examination performance and other statistical data

GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2013-14 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 St Columba's College achieving five or more GCSEs (A* to C and A* to E) and equivalent subjects, and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals band³.

<i>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</i>	<i>2014-15</i>	<i>2015-16</i>	<i>2016-17</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	61.90	75.80	100
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category ⁴	75.70	72.3	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	45.20	48.50	73.08
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category	51.7	43.50	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	97.62	96.97	100
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)	22.22	14.29	83.33

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.

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

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Number of pupils in Year 12 cohort	45	38	32

Subject	School Three year average at A* to C %	Northern Ireland Three year average at A* to C %
Hospitality and Catering	100.00	61.00
French	100.00	77.00
Spanish	100.00	82.00
Design and Technology	88.90	71.00
Personal and Social Education	100.00	90.00
Mathematics	60.40	51.00
Art & Design	84.60	76.00
Science Single Award	77.80	70.00
Business Studies	66.70	60.00
Information Technology	79.30	73.00
English	71.30	66.00
Construction	85.20	80.00
Office Technology	70.00	66.00
Health & Social Care	68.40	68.00
Sport/PE Studies	66.70	68.00
Religious Studies	61.70	64.00
Science Double Award	84.20	88.00
Public Services	60.40	70.00
History	50.00	63.00
Geography	43.50	63.00

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

Level 2	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Total entry over 3 years
	A* to C %	A* to C %	A* to C %	
BTEC Engineering First Certificate	100	100	100	39
OCR Text Processing Level 2 Award	57	100	100	35

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 St Columba's College who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for non-selective schools.

	School	NI	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	32	12996			
Employment	12.6%	11.6%	1		
Further Education	42.1%	44.2%	6	7	
Higher Education	27.4%	23.5%			
Work-based Learning (Training)	14.7%	15.2%			
Unemployed	2.1%	3.6%	0		
Unknown	1.1%	1.9%	1		
Other schools				17	

Inspection methodology and evidence base

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

Inspectors scrutinised the limited range of school policies and other documents and data which were made available by the school.

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 management⁵:

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.

⁵ And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable

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