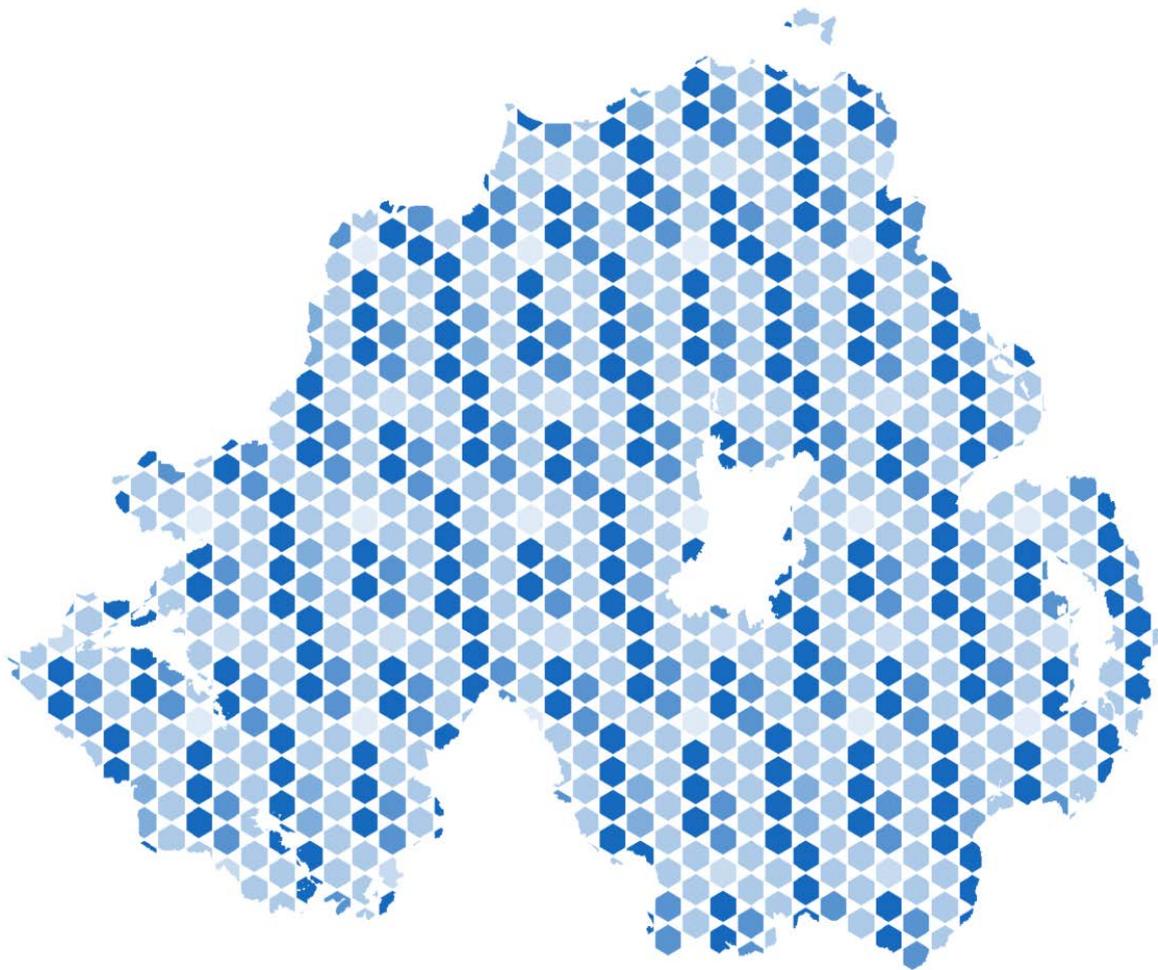


Education and Training Inspectorate

SPECIAL INSPECTION



Clifton School, Bangor, County Down

DE Ref No (431-6518)

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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1. Context

Clifton School is situated on the outskirts of Bangor and provides education for pupils aged three to nineteen who experience a wide range of increasingly complex difficulties which impact on their learning, communication, behaviour, sensory processing and social development. There has been a steady increase in enrolment over recent years including an increase in the number of pupils who have complex needs relating to significant medical conditions and require dedicated professional nursing care. The school has an eco-flag award and has achieved a silver award for developing the pupils' awareness and understanding of rights. They are part of a shared education partnership with a local controlled Primary school.

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 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.

2. Parents and staff questionnaire responses

Six percent of parents and 27 percent of the staff responded to the online, confidential questionnaire. The parents highlighted their children's enjoyment in learning, the staff support for the care, dignity and well-being of the pupils and the need for more regular information and communication regarding, for example, their children's learning programmes. The staff commented positively on the staff development opportunities available to them and the clear reporting procedures for safeguarding. In almost all of the additional comments from parents and staff a number of concerns were highlighted, which the ETI communicated to the principal and members of the board of governors, along with the main findings from the questionnaires.

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the outcomes for pupils; in particular, how the school is addressing individual needs;
- the quality of provision in the school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

Where it is 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

- The data which the school shared indicates that almost all of the pupils achieve well from studying courses in communication, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and Life Skills at OCR entry levels 1, 2, and 3. Almost all of the school leavers over the previous two academic years have successfully transitioned to, and maintain their placements in adult services, education and training.
- Comprehensive data analysis indicates that a recent cohort of pupils with severe challenging behaviour are now accessing appropriate learning programmes as a result of intensive, individualised behaviour-support.
- During a meeting with inspectors, the pupils spoke confidently about the variety of activities they enjoy which include swimming, ICT, shopping for cookery class, mathematics and art. The pupils shared their enjoyment of the opportunities for work experience and their participation in leadership roles such as the student council and buddy system.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the learning outcomes for the children/pupils/young people;
- progression in the children's/pupils'/young people's learning; and
- the children's/pupils' /young people's wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- The class timetables provided have a good balance and are matched well to the specific needs of the pupils, with a broad range of activities for a suitable duration. There are planned opportunities for physical development, communication, social skills and mathematics, along with sensory activities where appropriate.
- The sample of individual education plans made available are succinct and focus well on the pupils' learning, with clear targets and evaluations.
- The individual pupil transition plans provided are comprehensive with appropriate detail of current provision and strategies, and actions to be taken by the school, family and outside agencies for further progress towards transition to post- school placements. The school reports that following the annual review for pupils aged fourteen years, the plans and associated documents, for example lifting and handling plans, are shared annually with parents and stakeholders.
- The school has developed specialist provision for pupils who require behaviour support. Comprehensive assessments of difficulties, and an extensive range of strategies are used by experienced staff. The limitations of the school accommodation does not allow sufficient flexibility to work with the increasing number of pupils with challenging behaviour, who require alternative teaching areas prior to re-joining their peers when settled.

- The majority of the pupils take part in walking or running a mile a day at school. The opportunities for outside play are curtailed by unsafe climbing frames, swings and play houses which are no longer in use.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the quality of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, engagement/teaching/training and assessment in promoting successful learning; and
- care and welfare.

7. Leadership and management

- In the last three years the senior leadership team has been restructured to include two new leaders, three appointments to the middle leadership team and a part-time temporary vice-principal. There has been a review of the roles with leaders having additional responsibilities for liaising with medical professionals, external behaviour support services and allied health professionals.
- There is rigorous consultation with parents, governors, teachers, therapists and assistants which informs the priorities of the school development plan. The associated action plans have detailed baseline positions and clear and appropriate monitoring strategies are identified. However, it is important that the evaluations reflect more thoroughly and consistently the impact on pupil progress. There is a comprehensive programme for staff meetings, and professional development.
- The school has developed links with local special, primary and post-primary schools. One post-primary school collaborates with post-primary pupils from Clifton school for a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths event. In addition, specialist teachers from Clifton school provide a range of support to mainstream and special schools within the local area learning community.
- The parent and staff association have raised substantial funds in the past few years to improve the provision through, for example, funding extra-curricular activities such as archery, dance and music, purchasing early years resources and increasing the ICT provision across the school.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors have detailed knowledge about the life and work of the school through input into the school development plan and school policies. They provide a balance of support and challenge to the school's leadership through, for example, highlighting with relevant authorities and reviewing regularly the appropriateness of the arrangements for the growing number of pupils with complex medical needs. They have begun to meet with co-ordinators to develop further their knowledge of the curriculum outcomes and provision.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the effectiveness and impact of the strategic leadership and governance;
- 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 children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. Three groups of pupils from key stages two and three, and the leavers group reported that they feel safe in school, and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the out-workings of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

9. Overall effectiveness

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the staff, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

Health and safety/accommodation

1. One of the climbing frames, the swings and the play houses in the playground are not in use because they are unsafe.
2. There are some shrubs planted in the outside play areas, which have been partly removed. The raised wooden beds enclosing the planted areas are collapsing.
3. Some of the internal and external doors in the school do not have hinge finger guards to protect the pupils from injury.
4. The accommodation does not meet fully the complex needs of the pupils. There is a lack of appropriate withdrawal rooms in the school to provide pupils with quiet, calm environments in which to work, relax or benefit from sensory experiences for periods of the school day.

Statistical data

Clifton school	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Enrolment school	154	157	158	169
% Attendance	89	85	88	90
% FSME ¹	33	36	34	36
Newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

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

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework which guides inspection and self-evaluation within special schools is available on the ETI website [The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\): Special Education | Education Training Inspectorate](#).

Inspectors scrutinised documentation and held discussions with pupils and staff with specific responsibilities. The principal and the designated teacher for child protection co-operated with the inspection in relation to their safeguarding responsibilities, and the principal co-operated in relation to her leadership responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils; and
- the opportunity for the 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 management²:

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.

² And the overall provision in a unit, as applicable.

Overall effectiveness

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

<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>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 in 12 to 18 months.</p>
<p>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 in 18 to 24 months.</p>

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