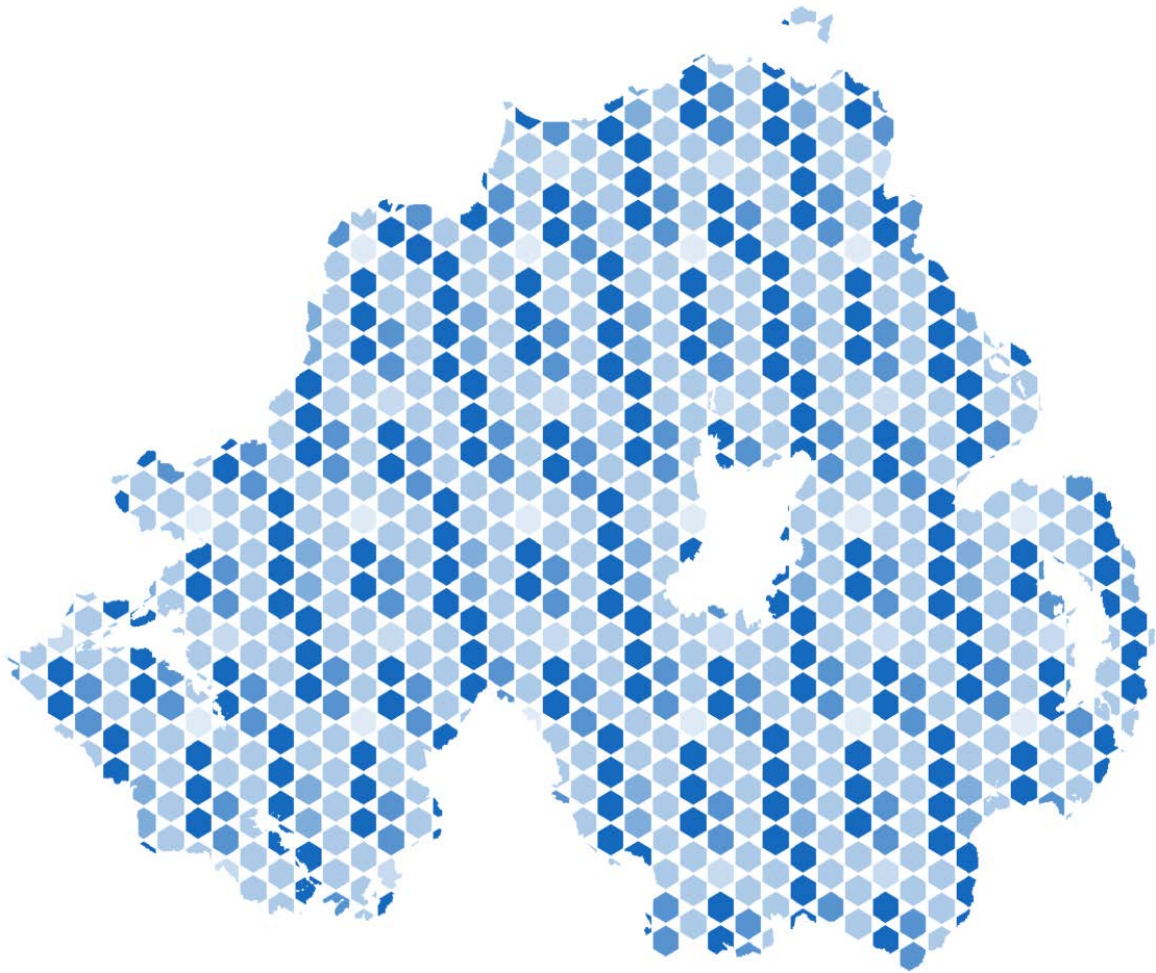


SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Hill Croft School, Newtownabbey,
County Antrim

Report of a Sustaining Improvement
Inspection (Involving Action Short of
Strike) in June 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Department of Education
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CUSTOMER
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Hill Croft School, Newtownabbey, County Antrim (331-6510)

Introduction

The previous inspection in June 2014 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Hill Croft School as good¹. In the interim a new vice-principal has been appointed and the senior leadership team has been restructured to include six heads of department, three of which are in a temporary position. Significantly the pupil enrolment has risen by almost fifty percent and almost one third of the permanent teaching staff have been appointed since the last inspection. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 12 June 2018.

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 teachers would 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.

Focus of the inspection

The areas of focus during the SII were to:

- identify and disseminate good practice across the school; and
- develop the assessment systems to monitor more effectively the progression of the pupils.

Key findings

- The focus on disseminating good practice across the school is supported by a strategic, incremental and detailed school development plan. Teachers identify their strengths and development needs within subject areas and a schedule of classroom observations is implemented. The subject co-ordinators observe and support teachers throughout the school. Consequently, their self-evaluations highlight the need to monitor further the progression for pupils across the key stages to inform departmental planning. The staff have devised a booklet on sharing good practice which has been used to develop the learning and teaching policy and to support new teachers. An audit completed by the teachers details the positive impact of sharing good practice on classroom pedagogy and teacher confidence, but further focus is required on the impact on the pupils' learning and outcomes. Through links with schools in the area learning community and a shared education project, staff are able to share and discuss good practice with other schools, for example in play, activity based learning and behaviour.

¹ From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as outstanding or very good has been reported as a school demonstrating a high level of capacity for sustained improvement

- The school has identified and developed a range of assessment systems to baseline, monitor and meet more effectively the needs of all the pupils. A clear cycle of assessment has been developed and shared with staff, parents and pupils. Through a comprehensive pastoral framework the pupils' pastoral needs are tracked across the year and individualised support strategies are implemented. Individual annual targets are monitored and reviewed to inform pupil progression and areas for improvement are identified. While the co-ordinators and class teachers evaluate collaboratively the appropriateness of annual targets, individual education plans and associated evidence samples, there are inconsistencies in the quality of the evaluations and the feedback to staff. A transition skills profile has recently been devised and the leadership team has identified the need to focus on transition and the development of life skills at key stages 3 and 4. It is important that an assessment team is established to develop further the work which has begun and address identified gaps, such as assessments for pupils in the sensory classes.

The ETI were unable to evaluate fully:

- the areas of focus; and
- the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.

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.

The school needs to:

- continue their review of the pastoral policies, to include anti-bullying and critical incident; and
- continue the review of educational risk assessments to ensure consistency and rigour across the school.

Conclusion

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 provided for the pupils. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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