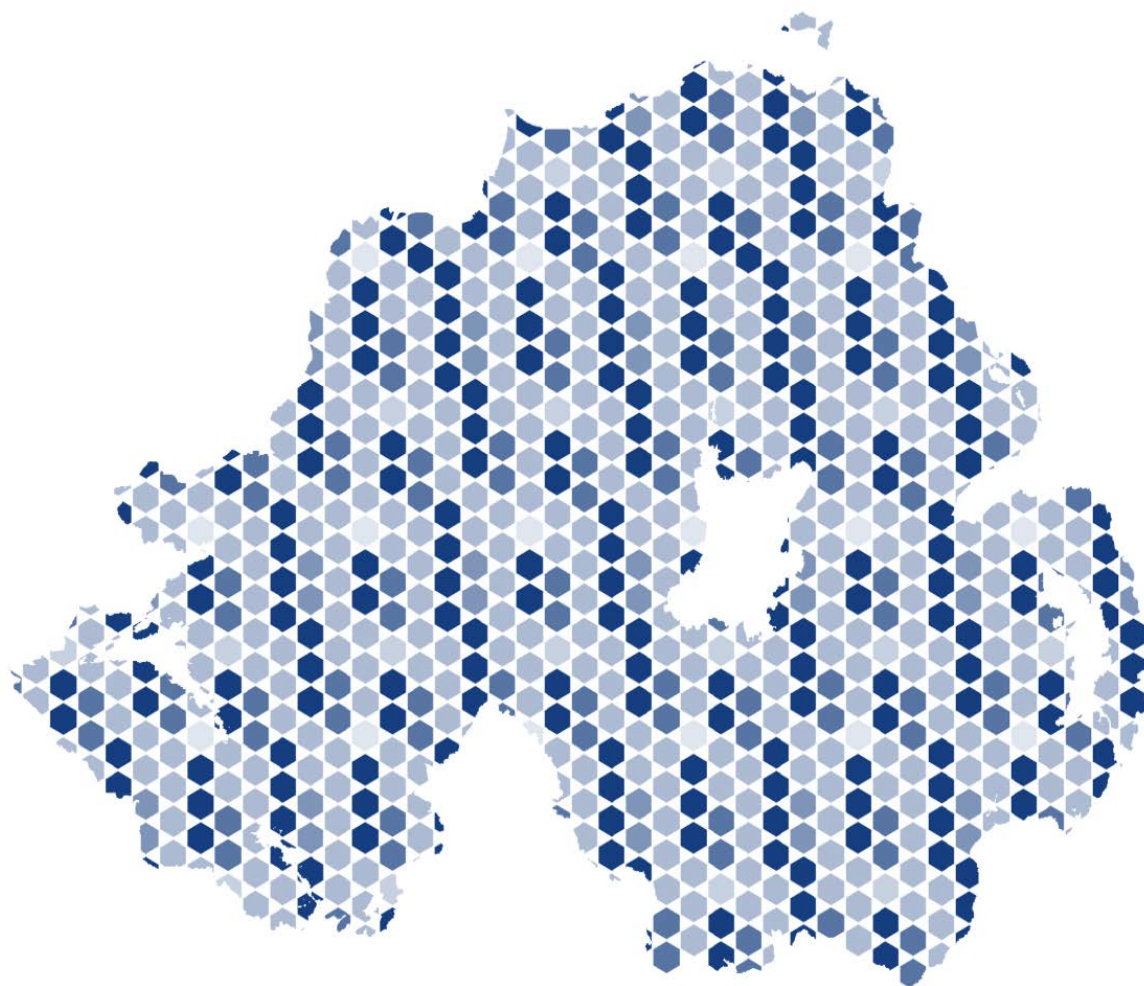


Education and Training Inspectorate

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Methodist College, Belfast

11-18, co-educational, voluntary grammar DE Ref No: 142-0022

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in January 2020



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Methodist College, Belfast (142-0022)

Introduction

Methodist College took part in the pilot of the sustaining improvement inspection in October 2016. Since the last inspection, large scale refurbishment has been undertaken of the listed buildings within the school site. The structure, roles and responsibilities at governance level have been reviewed and amended to improve further the capacity of governors to oversee school improvement. As a result of budgetary constraints, there have been some changes to the non-teaching staffing complement.

A sustaining improvement inspection was conducted in January 2020.

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 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 quality 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.

Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on evaluating the extent to which the school is capable of demonstrating its capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective school development planning. The school also provided evidence of provision for safeguarding as part of the inspection.

The lines of inquiry during the inspection were the school's actions to:

- improve further the pupils' independent learning and study skills; and
- develop further the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning.

Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking and impact of the identified actions associated with the lines of inquiry.

Key findings

- The school development plan is comprehensive and progressive, and is informed by contemporary educational research and meaningful consultation with all stakeholders. The senior leaders have set out a clear, strategic and challenging vision for the development work of the school. The pace of change is appropriate, with a well-structured programme of teacher professional learning which aligns well to the school's identified priorities.
- Over the past three years, the pupils have attained consistently high standards in public examinations at both GCSE and A level.

- A review of the special educational needs and learning support provision has been carried out recently to help ensure the curriculum and provision, including appropriate interventions, are tailored to meet the needs of all of the pupils.
- The teacher professional learning relates to the lines of inquiry and is underpinned by a well-conceived learning and teaching policy. Through the sharing of effective practice within the school, the creative and discerning use of ICT has enhanced planning for learning, assessment and administrative practices.
- There is clear guidance for pupils and useful exemplar materials to extend their understanding and skills in managing their own learning. Parents have also been provided with practical information on how they can best support their child's learning and progress.
- In discussions with the pupils, they spoke of: the wide range of opportunities available to them to develop their talents and attributes, and to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community as active citizens; the welcoming ethos of the school and their strong relationships with the teachers and adults who support them; and, the breadth of curriculum offer which helps prepare them well for the next stage of their learning. They value highly the support and commitment of their teachers. In developing school policies, the views of the pupils are sought and acted upon; the school's values permeate all aspects of school life.
- The ETI was unable to evaluate 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 issued by 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 pupils 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.

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

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