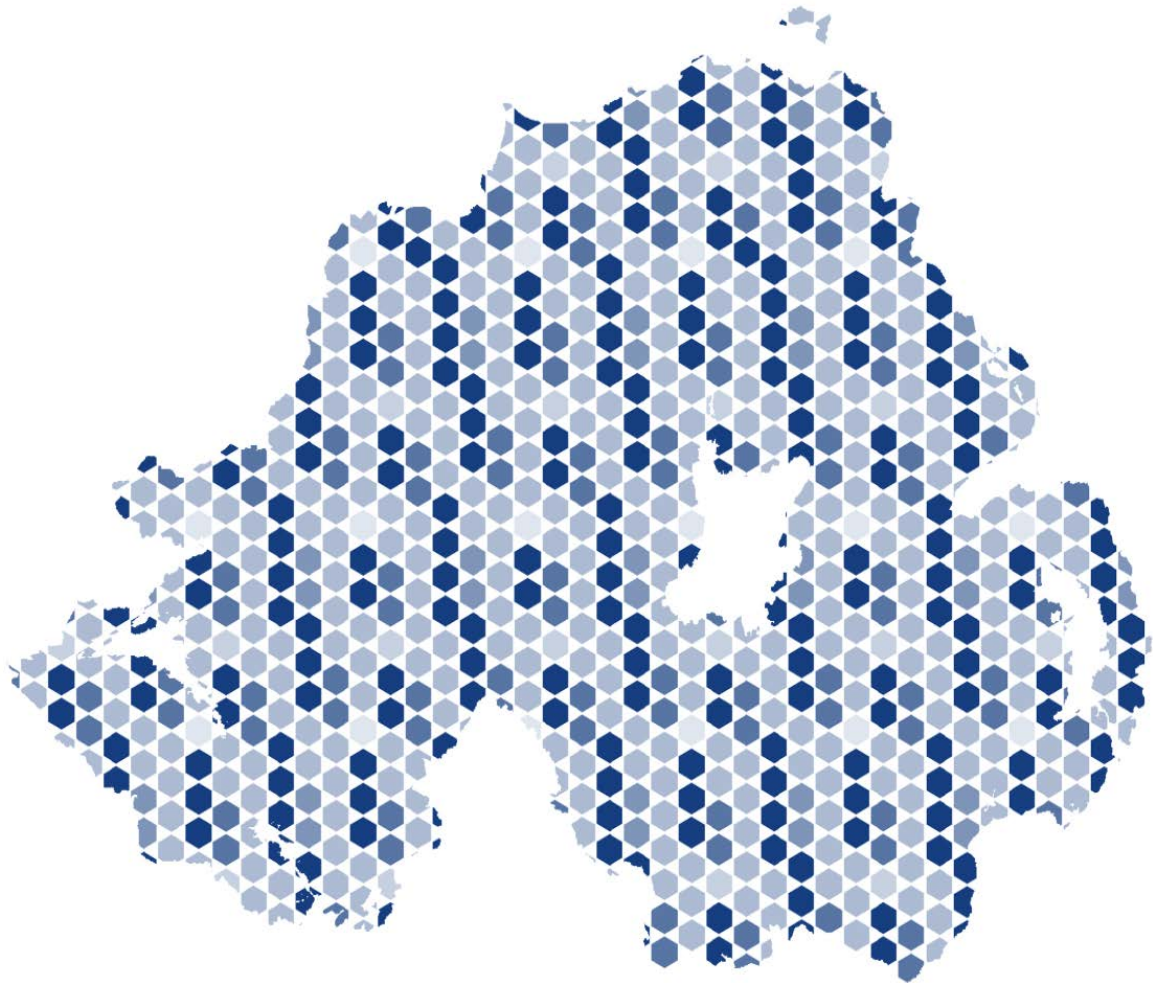


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Nendrum College, Comber,
County Down

Controlled, co-educational 11-18 non-selective

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



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 Nendrum College, Comber, County Down (421-0045)

Introduction

The previous inspection in May 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Nendrum College as good¹. In the interim period the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals has risen from 31% in 2015 to 39% in 2017; and the percentage of pupils who require additional support with their learning has increased from 31% in 2015 to 43% in 2017. The school continues to be oversubscribed. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 14 May 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, with the exception of engagement with the senior leadership team, the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspection beyond professional dialogue. 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 purpose of the SII was to evaluate 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 SII were the school's actions to:

- sustain and improve further the pupils' attainments in public examinations and, in particular, in science; and
- sustain improvement in standards of teaching and learning in Key Stage (KS) 3 through a connected learning initiative.

Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the lines of inquiry.

Key findings

- Over the past four years, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C has improved significantly from 54% in 2014 to 90% in 2017 which is well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools in the same free school meals category.
- The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C including English and maths has improved from 26% in 2015 to 37.5% in 2017 which is above the NI average. However the school has appropriately identified the overall proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs or equivalents at grades A*-C including English and mathematics as an area for improvement.

¹ From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as good is reported as 'the school is demonstrating the capacity to identify and bring about improvement.'

- Since the last inspection the standards attained by pupils in science have improved and in particular in single award science where in the last two years all of the pupils entered attained at grades A*-C.
- The school has focused on establishing meaningful opportunities for connected learning through a collaborative, thematic approach which is well-planned and facilitates the dissemination of effective practice across departments. In discussion with the inspectors, pupils spoke positively about connected learning opportunities which they felt enabled them to develop their independent learning and transfer their skills across a range of relevant contexts. However, owing to action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact of this school improvement work on sustaining improvement in standards of teaching and learning at KS3.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The school continues to review, update and ratify the suite of pastoral policies to reflect the most recent departmental guidance. In discussions with a selection of pupils from across the key stages, the pupils spoke very positively about their experiences in school and appreciate the academic and pastoral support they receive. They reported that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to talk to if they have any concerns about their welfare. 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.

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 pupils. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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