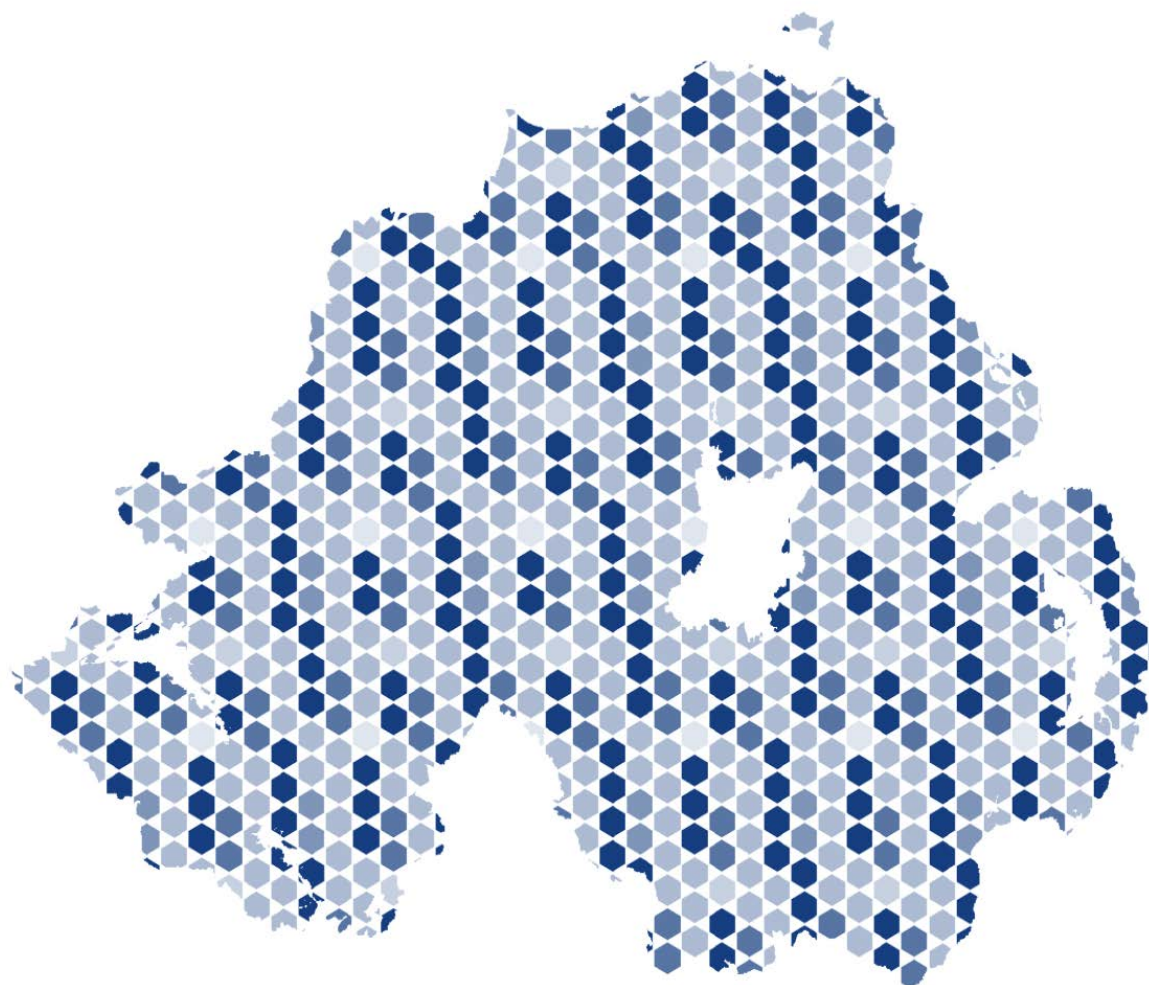


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Our Lady's Grammar School,  
Newry, County Down

11-18, all-girls, voluntary, selective school

Report of a Sustaining Improvement  
Inspection (Involving Action Short of  
Strike) in October 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 Our Lady's Grammar School, Newry (542-0060)**

### **Introduction**

The previous inspection in January 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Our Lady's Grammar School as outstanding<sup>1</sup>. In the interim period a new principal has been appointed and there have been significant changes in the senior leadership team (SLT). A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted in October 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 only members of the senior leadership team (SLT) would be co-operating with the inspection. 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:

- develop the capacity of leaders at all levels throughout the school, including the pupils; and
- strengthen links with business in the local community, to enable pupils to become effective contributors to society.

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 restructuring and clarification of roles and responsibilities of the SLT has enabled senior leaders to provide effective, strategic leadership in the implementation of the school's ongoing improvement agenda. The strengthening of links between Governors, SLT and middle leaders has focused on a collaborative approach to school improvement with the pupils at the core.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eti.ni.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/%5Bcurrent-domain%3Amachine-name%5D/post-primary-inspection-our-ladys-grammar-school-newry.pdf>

- Overall the very high standards attained by the pupils in public examinations have been maintained. The outstanding results achieved by the pupils at GCSE have been sustained and improved further. Almost all of the pupils (94%) achieve 7 GCSE's including English and mathematics at grades A\*-C. Since the original inspection the percentage of pupils attaining seven or more examinations at GCSE at grades A\*-B including English and mathematics has improved from 66% in 2015 to 70% in 2018. While there has been some variation in the attainment of the pupils at GCE A Level over the last three years, appropriate intervention and well-tailored support for the pupils has impacted positively on attainment and improved outcomes for the pupils. In 2018 most of the pupils (81%) attained 3 A level grades at A\*-C which is above the Northern Ireland average for similar schools in the same free schools meals category.
- There is evidence of capacity building of leaders, including the pupils, throughout the school. The development of the link system between the SLT and middle leaders has focused on supporting and developing further the capacity of middle leaders to monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility and effectiveness to bring about improvement. Pupils are provided with extensive opportunities to develop their leadership skills through the school council, associate sub-committees and the senior council. The student voice is sought, listened to and acted upon to inform the school development plan and improve further the pupils' school experience.
- Effective links have been established and are being developed further with business in the local community and beyond; as a result the school is being better informed of labour market requirements and the skills the pupils need to become effective contributors to society. The school has focussed on developing meaningful opportunities for pupil-led, connected and collaborative learning through science, technology, engineering and mathematics projects which have been expanded appropriately to include the Arts subjects. The projects are well planned and facilitate the development of the pupils' creativity, innovation, resilience, communication and problem solving skills, as well as the requisite skills for employability to enable the pupils to be effective contributors to society.
- The pupils are very proud of and loyal to their school. In discussions, they highlighted the very positive relationships they have with the staff, their enjoyment of learning and the extensive extra-curricular offer. The senior pupils value the leadership roles afforded to them and appreciated the high levels of academic and pastoral support from their teachers.

## **Safeguarding**

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The pupils reported that they feel safe in school and that they 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 outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

## **Conclusion**

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by almost all of 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.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2018

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk)