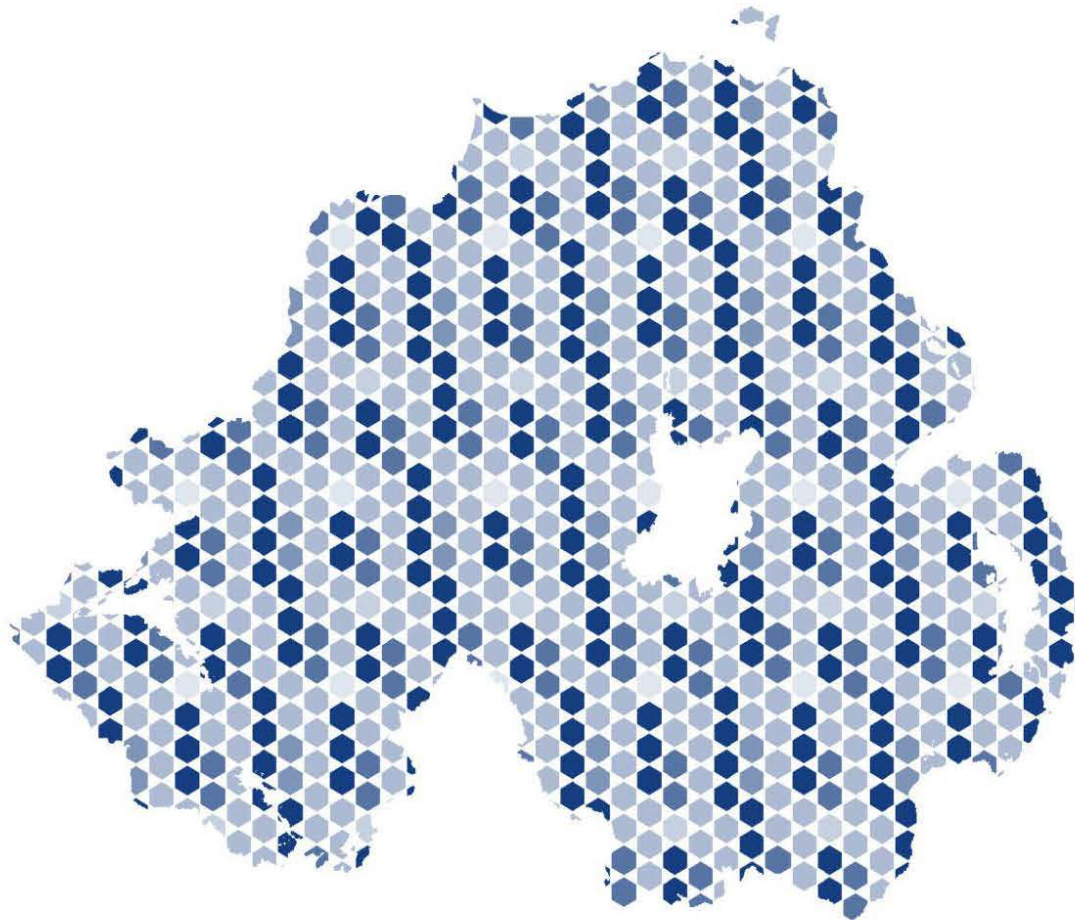


Education and Training Inspectorate

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Brigid's College, Derry

Maintained, non-selective, co-educational 11-19 school DE Ref No: 223-0225

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in October 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Introduction

The previous inspection in [October 2016](#) evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Brigid's College as having the capacity to identify and bring about improvement. In the interim there has been a change in senior leadership; consequently the senior leadership team has been re-structured. The overall enrolment has increased from 600 to 735 with post-16 remaining steadily at around 70 pupils. There have also been permanent appointments to the Autism Unit which is currently significantly oversubscribed.

A sustaining improvement inspection was conducted in October 2019.

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 standards 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 the outcomes for the pupils, in particular in English at GCSE and in the Autism Centre; and
- develop further the curriculum at key stage (KS) 4 and post-16.

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

- There is evidence of strategic and targeted improvement work since the last inspection and as a result pupil attainment has improved; the pupils achieve very high outcomes in public examinations at KS 4 and post-16. The school development plan and associated action plans prioritise a range of strategies to track progress and raise attainment at all levels, particularly for those pupils identified as being at risk of not achieving. In particular, there has been significant improvement in in GCSE English at grades A*-C

with the outcomes now above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. A key focus of the school's improvement has been to address the variation in attainment across the range of subjects at KS4; a majority of the subjects at GCSE are now in line with or above the corresponding NI subject averages (in those subjects for which there are corresponding NI subject averages).

- The development of the curriculum is flexible, informed year-on-year by quantitative and qualitative data and is responsive to individual needs. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has broadened at KS 4 to include a range of applied subjects to meet better the needs, abilities and aspirations of the pupils; this includes a bespoke curriculum provision for a small number of KS 4 pupils to enable them to progress and ensure they are employment-ready by the end of year 12. The school has begun to address issues around the curriculum offer and number of subjects delivered at post-16; this remains an area for development.
- Since the time of the last inspection priority has been given to the development of provision in the Autism Unit. All pupils have a tailored timetable which includes mainstream lessons and discrete teaching within the unit. There is a clear understanding of progress made by the pupils in the unit and the leadership has planned strategically for future development.
- In discussions with the inspectors, the pupils spoke appreciatively of the pastoral and academic support they receive from staff. The pupils also talked positively about the careers education information advice and guidance, including meaningful work experience opportunities. The senior pupils were confident and highly motivated, acknowledging the opportunities they have for leadership, for example, through the school leadership teams, the school council and the mentoring system. They valued how the school has been responsive to their needs and chosen career pathways through the curriculum choices on offer.
- The ETI was unable to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff continue to plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the post-16 provision in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. Appropriately, the school continues to review and update its pastoral policies and is working towards having a schedule in place. 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. 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 children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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