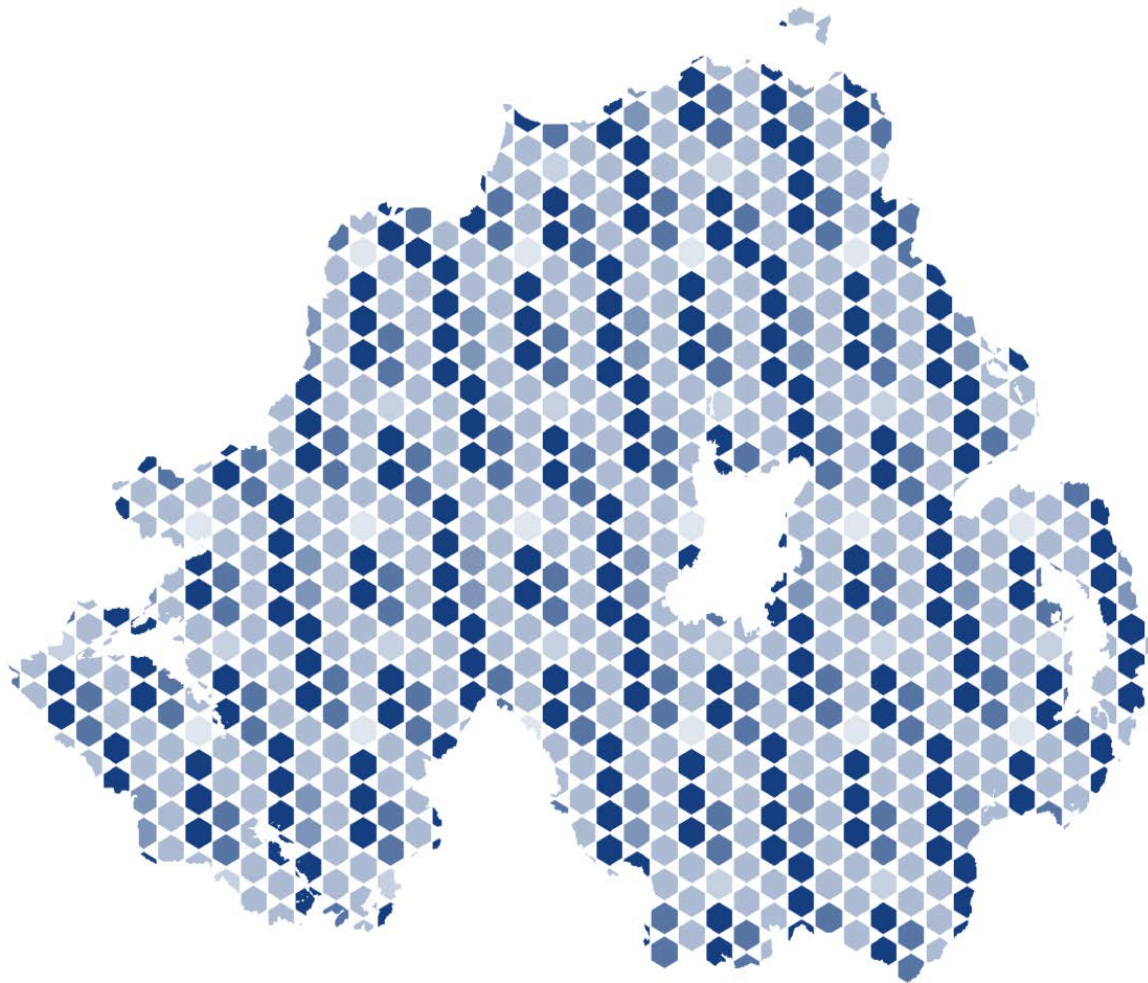


Education and Training Inspectorate

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Colman's College, Newry, County Down

11-18, all-boys, voluntary, selective school DE ref no (542-0062)

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



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 St Colman's College, Newry (542-0062)

Introduction

The previous inspection in September 2014 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Colman's College as very good¹. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted in February 2019.

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 line of inquiry during the SII was:

- how self-evaluation has informed curriculum review, development and change to meet more effectively the needs of pupils, particularly those at key stage transition points.

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 an embedded culture of self-evaluation at senior leadership level, the effective use and analysis of data informs well the school development plan and identifies key priorities for ongoing school improvement. The restructuring of the school day has enabled curriculum change across the key stages. The pupils are well informed at key transitional points to make appropriate subject choices and select career pathways matched well to their ability. This is particularly evident at post-16, where the curriculum change to include vocational subjects and pathways have impacted positively on the outcomes achieved by the pupils. This improvement work has been supported by appropriate changes to leadership and management in the school. Senior leaders provide effective strategic leadership and are empowered to lead on and take responsibility for ongoing school improvement work.
- There has been an improving trend in attainment at GCE A level over the last three years; it is notable that since the original inspection the percentage of pupils who attain 3 GCE A levels at grades A*-C has improved further from 80% in 2014 to 88% in 2018 which is well above the Northern Ireland average for similar schools in the same free schools meals category.

¹ Since September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as very good is reported as 'the school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement.'

- The pupils who met with inspectors are very proud of their school, respectful of each other and wholly positive about their experiences in school. In discussions, they highlighted: the excellent facilities and resources in the school, including the use of digital technology to support their learning; the very positive working relationships with staff; the academic and pastoral support they receive in the school; the very good opportunities created for them to accept responsibility and to develop their leadership skills through a range of initiatives including the well-established student council and the prefect system; and, their enjoyment of the extensive range of extra-curricular activities provided for them. The pupils in KS4 and post 16 also spoke very positively about the school facilitating their subject choices, through the open options system. They were very appreciative of the support and guidance they receive to select appropriate subjects and career pathways matched to their ability and future career aspirations.

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.

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