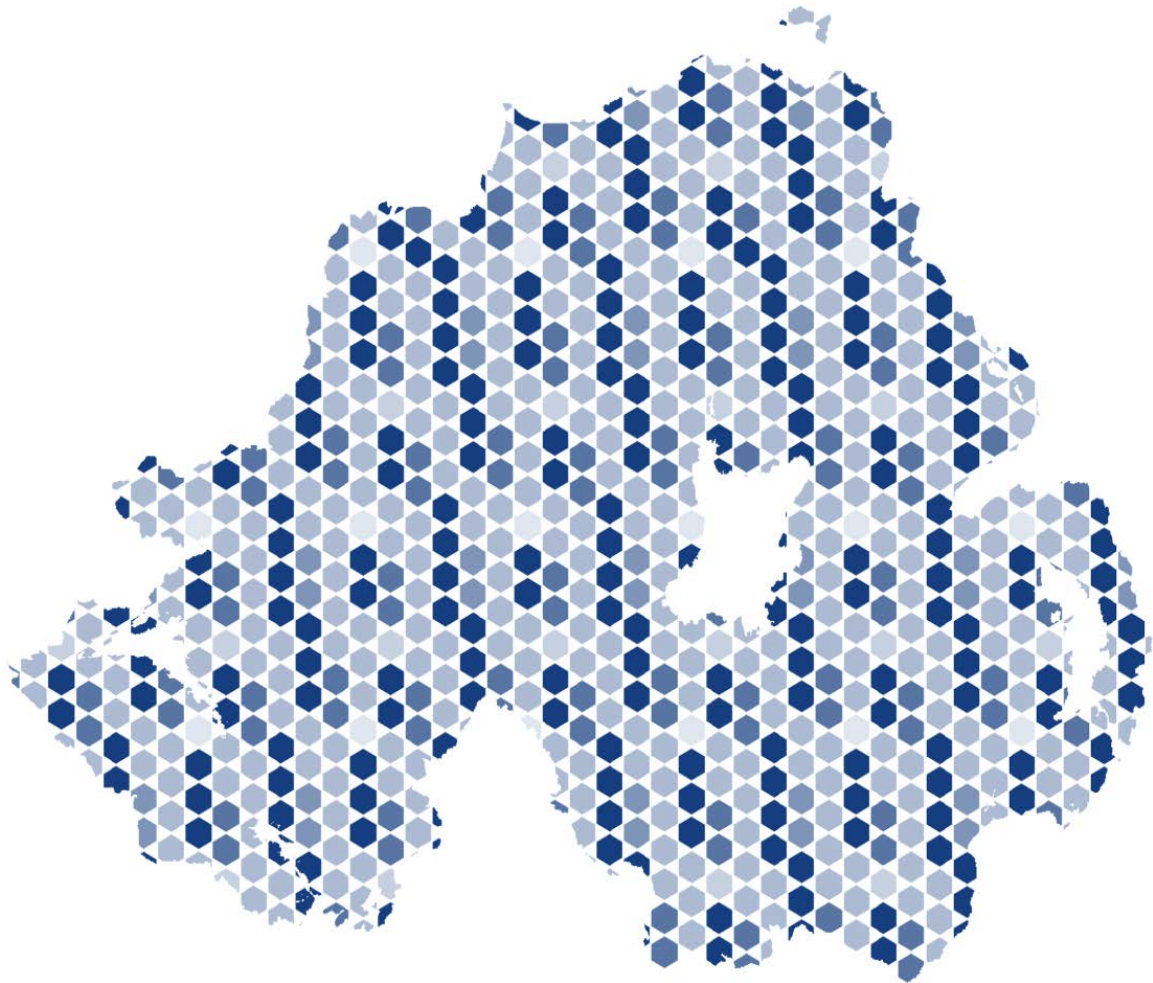


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Joseph's Boys' High School,
Newry, County Down

11-16, all-boys', maintained, non-selective school,
including a Learning Support Centre

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Joseph's Boys' High School, Newry (523-0056)

Introduction

The previous inspection in November 2014 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Joseph's Boys' High School as good¹. In the interim period a new principal has been appointed and a new senior leadership team (SLT) are in place. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 8 March 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 almost all of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. 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 use of data to meet more effectively the individual and pastoral needs of the pupils; and
- increase the capacity of middle leaders to promote positive outcomes for the pupils.

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

Key findings

- There is evidence of appropriate on going school improvement work in the school, lead effectively by the senior leadership team.
- The fusion of the school's academic, pastoral work and related data provides a more holistic view of and an increased understanding of the individual and pastoral needs of the pupils; this is informing the provision of appropriate learning experiences and tailoring of the curriculum offer. The school has appropriately reviewed and streamlined the systems in place for the assessment and tracking of pupil progress. This includes the introduction of the pupil profile to capture data on an individual basis, closely monitor each pupil's progress and inform intervention strategies to meet better their individual and pastoral needs.

¹ Since 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.'

- The restructuring of the SLT and the streamlining of responsibilities has enabled senior leaders to effectively focus on increasing the capacity of middle leaders to action plan for improvement. Through well targeted staff development and an agreed, consistent approach to action planning, middle leaders have identified key areas for improvement that are linked to and support well the priorities in the school development plan. This has impacted positively on the outcomes for the pupils.
- The very good results achieved by the pupils at GCSE have been sustained and improved further. In public examinations over three-quarters (78%) of the pupils attain five or more examinations at GCSE or equivalent level at grades A*-C; this is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools in the same free schools meals category. Since the original inspection the percentage of pupils attaining five or more examinations at GCSE including English and mathematics at grades A*- C has improved from 35% in 2014 to 56% in 2017 which is well above the average for similar schools.

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 who met with the inspectors spoke very positively about their experiences in school, they appreciate the high levels of academic and pastoral support they receive from the staff; and, they are very proud of their 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.

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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