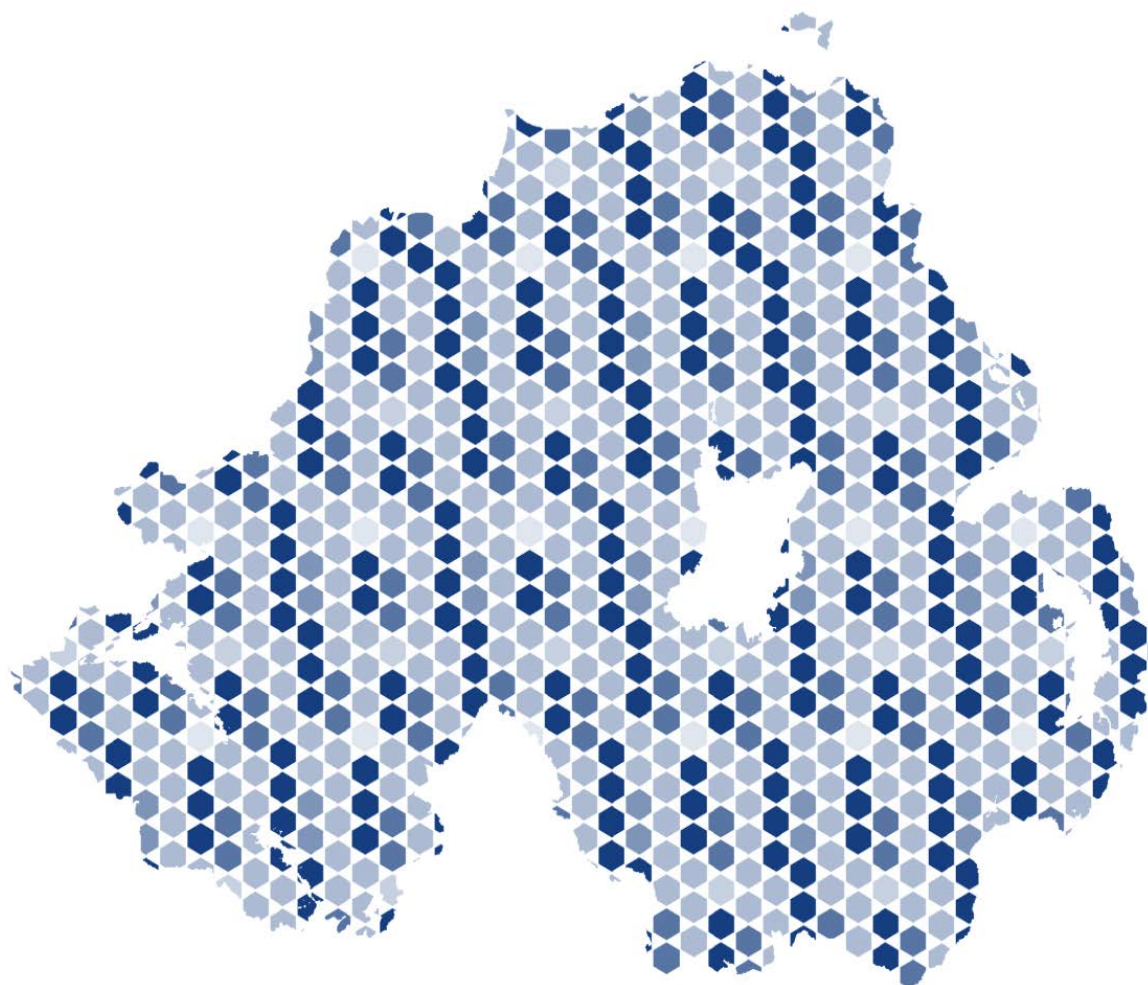


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Grammar School,
Magherafelt, County Londonderry

Co-educational, voluntary grammar

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
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt (342-0080)

Introduction

The previous inspection in February 2015, evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Mary's Grammar School as outstanding¹. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 9 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 only the senior leadership team 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 further the use of ICT to improve further the quality of teaching and learning;
- use data effectively to continue to raise standards.

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

Key findings

- Since the time of the last inspection, a substantial investment in infra-structure, in professional development for teachers and in a comprehensive approach to e-safety have underpinned the successful implementation of mobile technology at key stages 3 and 4. This, together with curricular developments, has broadened further the pupils' experiences in digital learning. The impact of this work has been monitored, evaluated and its focus refined in consultation with pupils, parents and staff. Owing to action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact of this school improvement work; however, the school's evaluations indicate further improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and an increasing digital literacy among the pupils, including the ability to manage the impact of technology on their wellbeing.

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

- The use of data to support further raising of standards is strategic, well-embedded and highly effective. Specifically, the school's system of fine-grading ensures that potential underachievement is identified and addressed promptly with targeted interventions at individual pupil and subject level. This approach enables pupils to understand clearly their current progress, to take increasing ownership of their learning and to raise further their aspirations. It has supported the incremental year-on-year increase, from an already very high base, in the pupils' attainment of the highest grades at GCE level: in the last academic year half of all grades attained by the pupils at this level are A* or A grades.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. It will be important for the school to review and update pastoral policies in order to reflect and guide practice within the school. In discussion with the inspectors, the pupils reported that they feel safe in school and know what to do and whom to talk to if they are concerned 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, and 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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