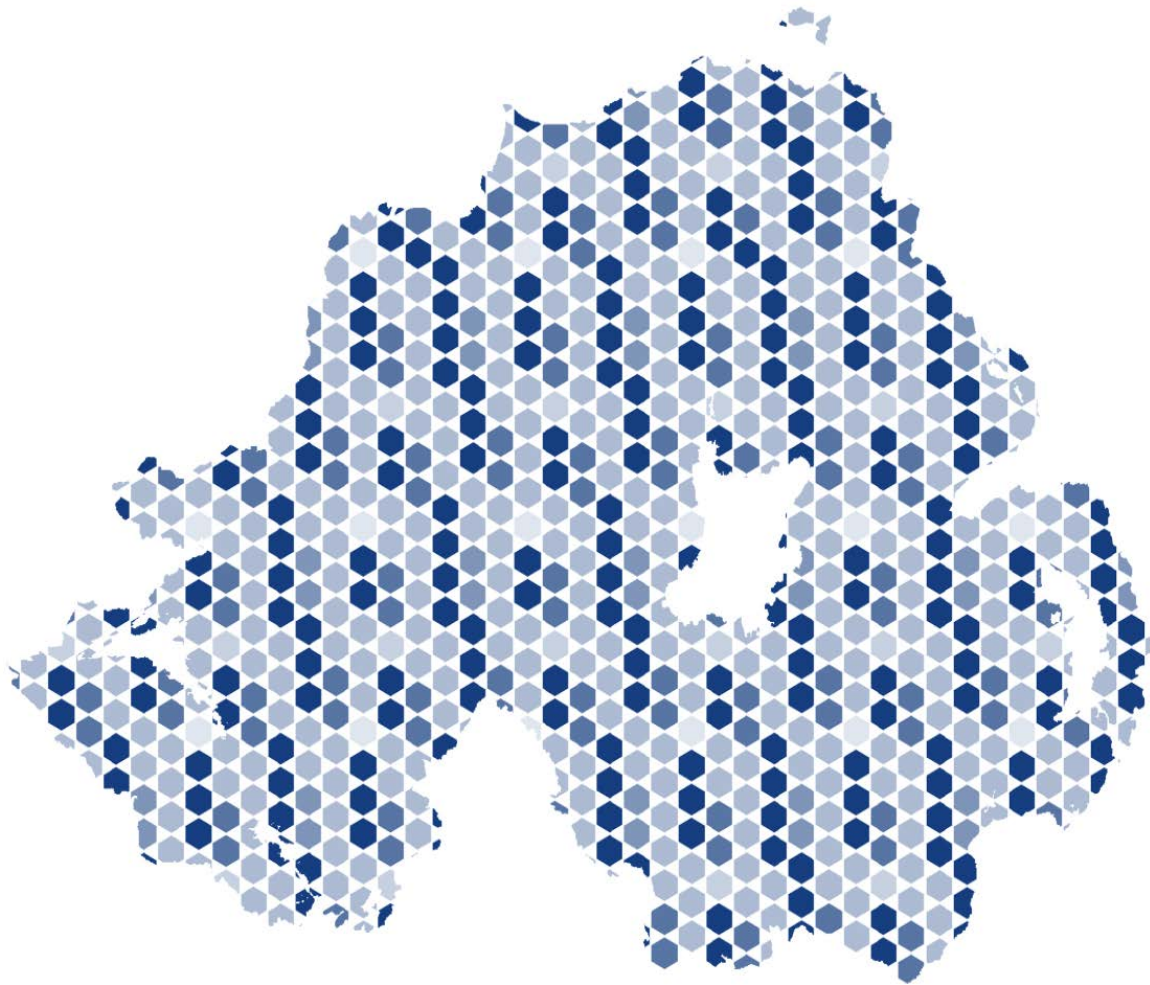


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Sullivan Upper School, Holywood,
County Down

Co-educational, 11-18, voluntary, selective school

Report of a Sustaining Improvement
Inspection (Involving Action Short of
Strike) in November 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 Sullivan Upper School, Holywood (442-0044)

Introduction

The previous inspection in October 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Sullivan Upper School as demonstrating a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners¹.

A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted in November 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 the principal and two vice-principals would be participating in 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 the school's actions to:

- develop the use of individual learning goals and internal and external performance data to inform curriculum provision, support learning and teaching, and raise standards particularly at 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 line of inquiry.

Key findings

- As part of the school's ongoing self-evaluation strategy, it is refining the existing target setting procedure by developing the use of learning goals, particularly at post-16, as practical steps that pupils take in order to fulfil their potential and reach their academic target.
- The school has collated and evaluated a range of internal and external data and information. This includes a literature review on learning goals to inform strategic planning, an analysis and evaluation of post-16 examination entries and outcomes to identify pupils at risk of underachievement, and, bespoke external staff development and feedback from pupil focus groups to inform key aspects of classroom practice and curriculum development.
- The pupils continue to sustain high standards at key stage (KS) 4. In the past three years, over three-quarters of the pupils have attained seven or more GCSEs at grades A* to B including English and mathematics.

¹<https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/post-primary-inspection-sullivan-upper-school-holywood.PDF>

- At post-16, over the past three years the proportion of pupils achieving three or more GCE A levels has decreased and is now below the Northern Ireland average for similar schools.
- The year 13 focus group of pupils who met with the inspector were reflective of their past learning experiences at key stage (KS) 3 and KS4 and recognise the higher order learning demands of their A level subjects. They spoke enthusiastically and positively about the benefits of setting individual learning goals, and how the learning conversations with their teachers are assisting them with their learning and academic progress, both in and between lessons.
- The pupils from across all of the key stages who met with the inspector, spoke confidently and positively about their learning experiences across the curriculum, and the well-targeted support and evaluative feedback they receive from their teachers to improve their work. They acknowledged the opportunities they had to take on leadership roles and responsibilities and their participation in a wide range of after-school activities to enhance their wider skills.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussion with the inspectors, the pupils reported that they feel safe 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 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 education provided for the pupils. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

Health and safety

The open access to the site and school buildings which has been identified in the school's minor works proposal needs to be addressed urgently.

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